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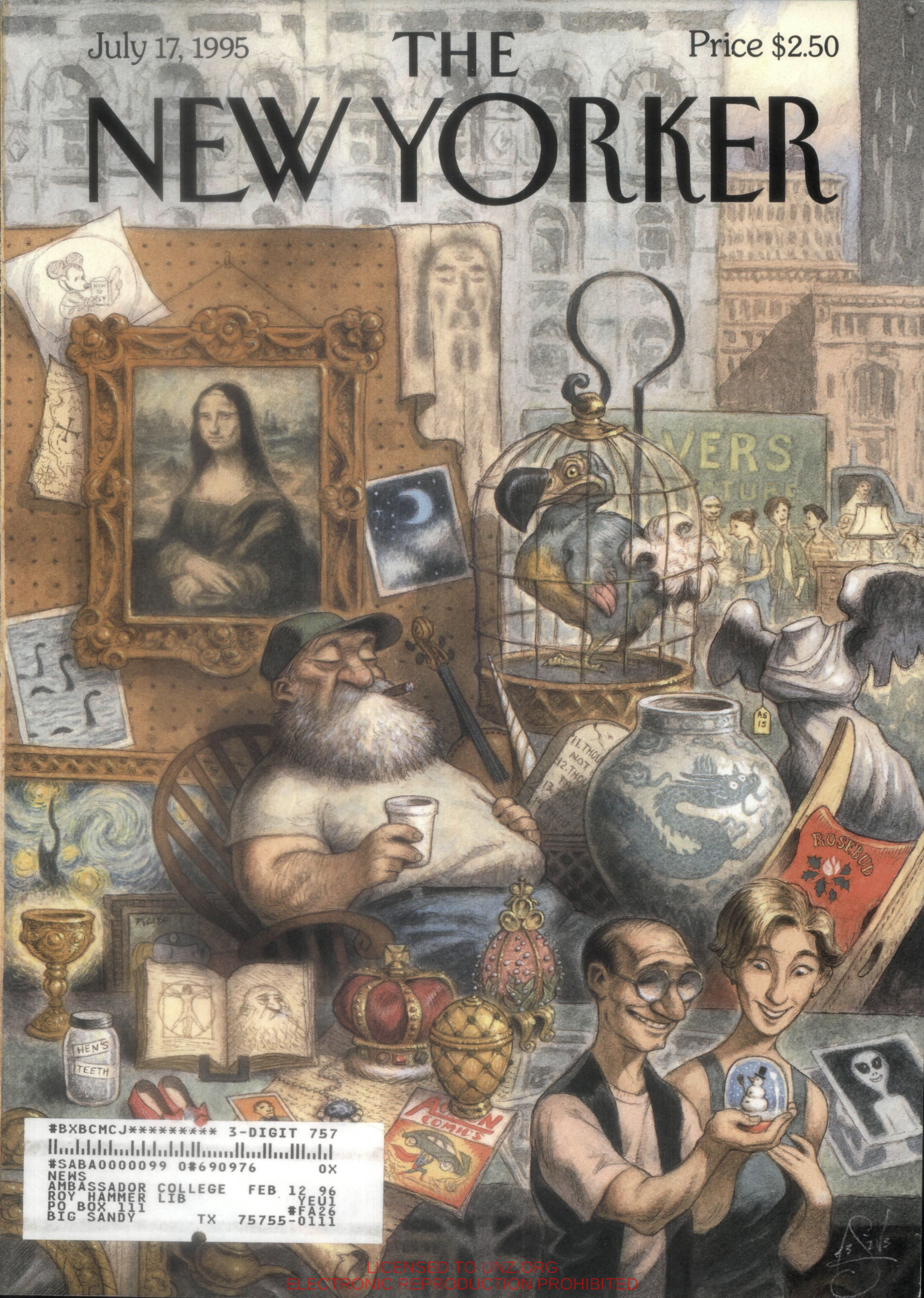
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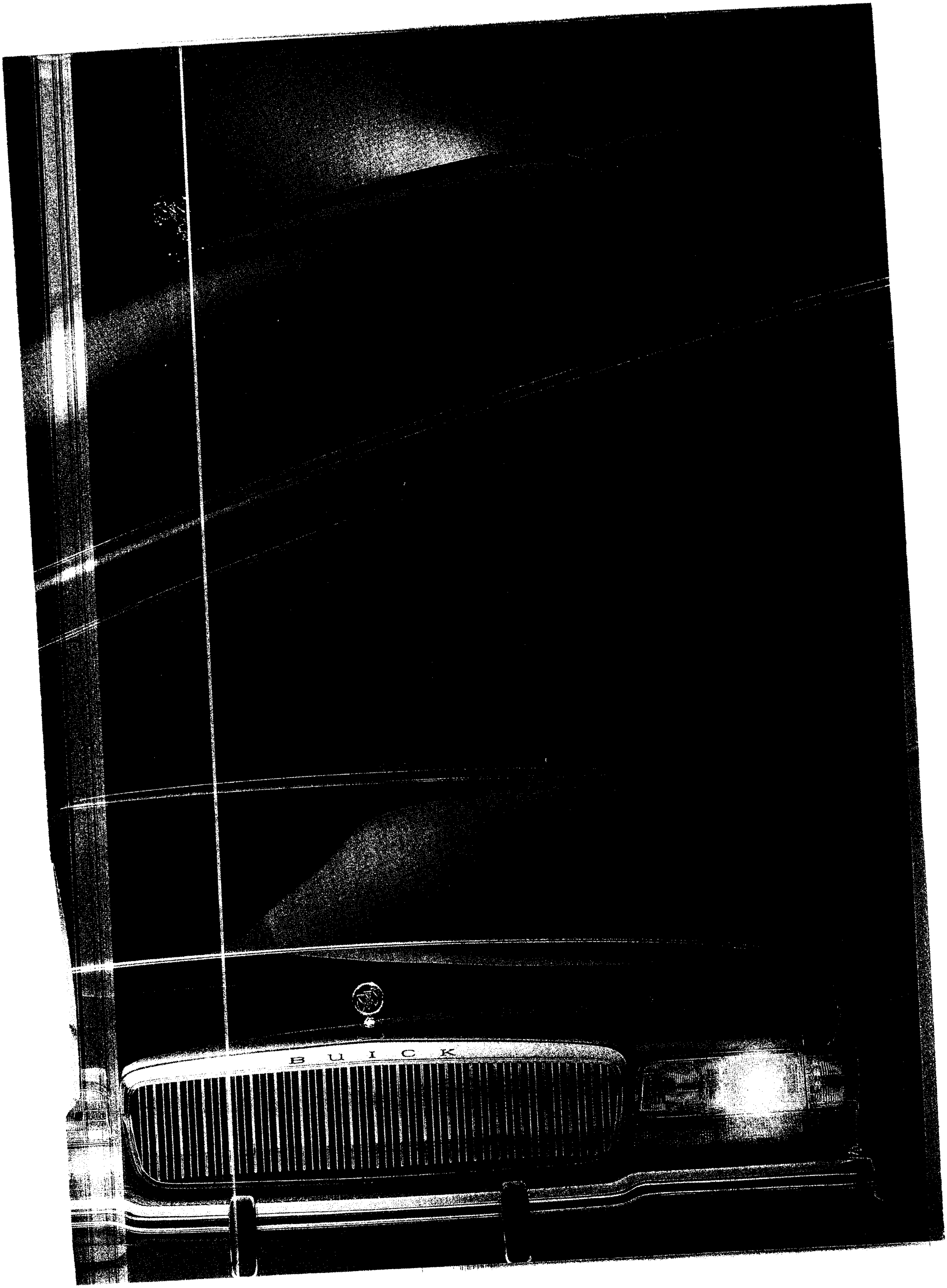
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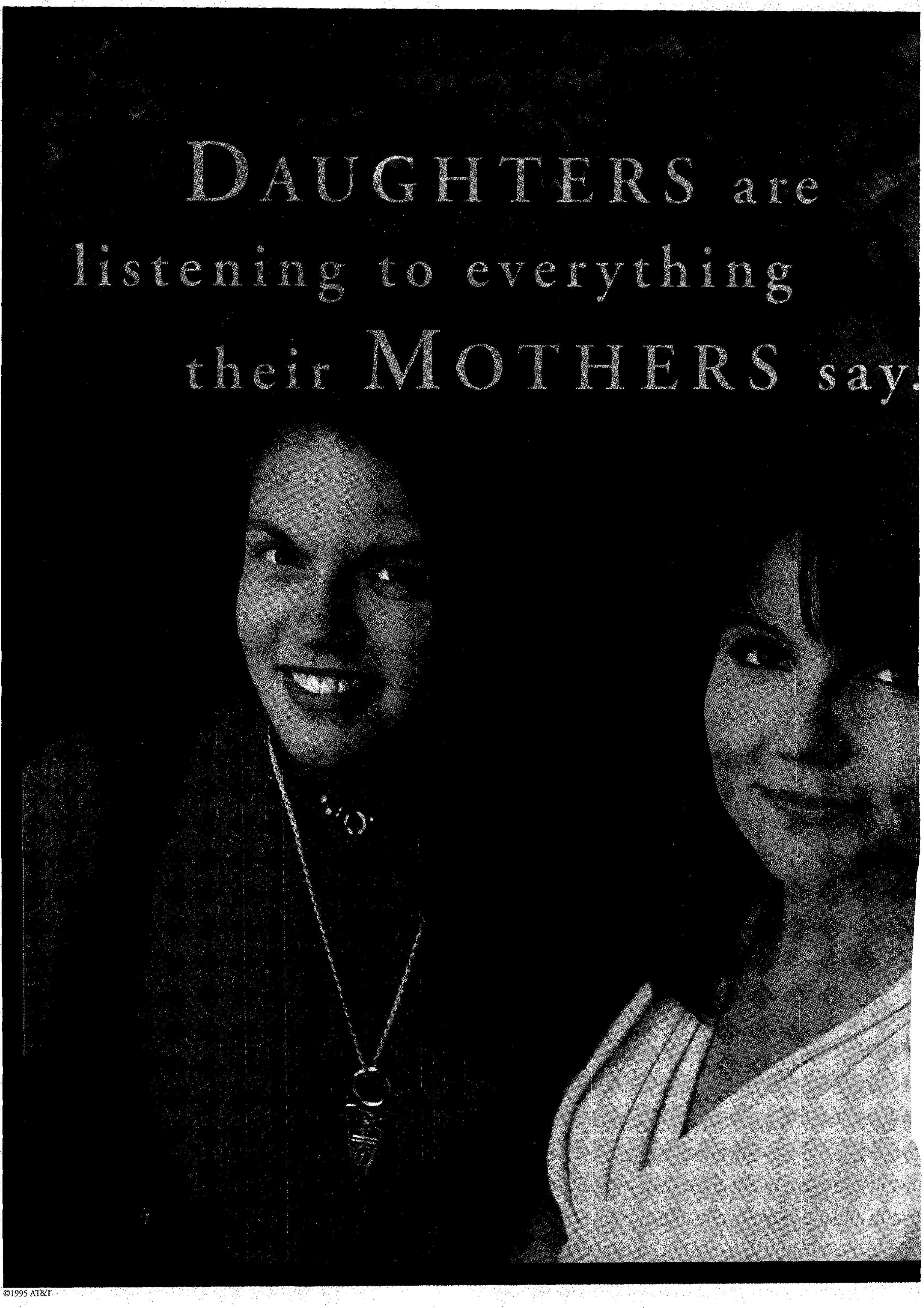
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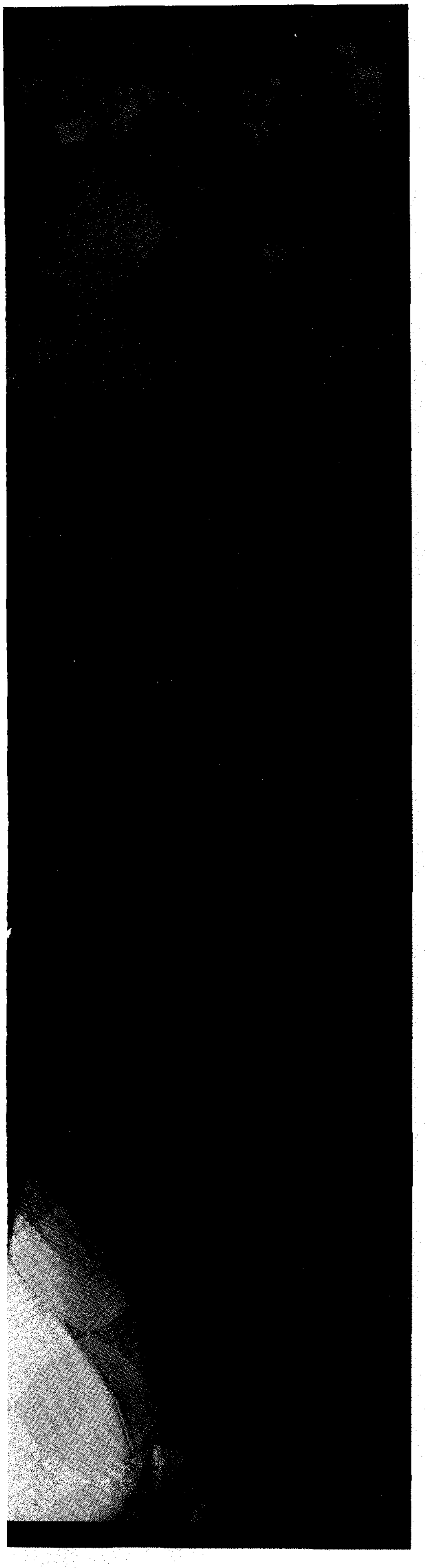

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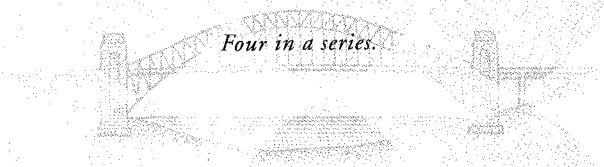

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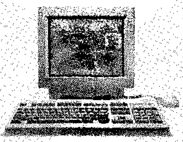

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JULY 17, 1995

COMMENT Cookie Monster. . . . . *Hendrik Hertzberg* 6
Is Capitol Hill's top politician a four-year-old at heart?

IN THE MAIL 8

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 10

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 22
The Fire Chief and Robert Vesco; Hollywood's new A-list chain letter; the cabbies' champion; Cape Cod arrival; etc.

DEPARTMENTS

Letter from Washington The Man of the Minute. . . . . *Michael Kelly* 26
William Bennett proves once again that he can package an issue—but is there anything inside the package?

Annals of Law Putting It in Black and White . . . . *Jeffrey Toobin* 31
As O. J. Simpson's defense begins, many blacks still see the case as a metaphor that only the black press articulates.

Personal History The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi . . . . *Amitav Ghosh* 35
Why the author has been unable to write about what he witnessed in India nearly eleven years ago.

PROFILE Dealing with Roseanne . . . . *John Lahr* 42
What is Roseanne? Loud, vulgar, difficult, influential—and very, very funny. Photographs by Annie Leibovitz.

FICTION "Experiment" . . . . *Julian Barnes* 62
The things Uncle Freddy got up to in Paris.

THE ART WORLD Whistler in the Dark . . . . *Adam Gopnik* 68
Whistler may have been the only American who was capable of teaching Oscar Wilde a thing or two.

THE CRITICS

Books Deborah Meier's "The Power of Their Ideas" . . . . *James Traub* 74
Marjorie Garber's "Vice Versa" . . . . *Edmund White* 79
Showcase The Mark Morris Dance Group . . . . . *Annie Leibovitz, Joan Acocella* 82
The Current Cinema "First Knight" . . . . *Anthony Lane* 84

POEMS

"The Way Things Are in Franklin" . . . . *Jane Kenyon* 29
"Curator" . . . . *James Lasdun* 50
"Theatre of Pain" . . . . *Elizabeth Spires* 66

SHOUTS & MURMURS The Michigan Militia Bulb Catalogue. . . . *Bruce Feirstein* 86

COVER *The Treasure, by Peter de Sève*

DRAWINGS *Charles Barsotti, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Peter Steiner, Jack Ziegler, Mick Stevens, Mort Gerberg, Michael Crawford, Roz Chast, Michael Maslin, Victoria Roberts, Andrea Arroyo, Henry Martin, Tom Cheney, Robert Weber, Gahan Wilson, Frank Cotham, Mike Twohy, Danny Shanahan, John Jonik*

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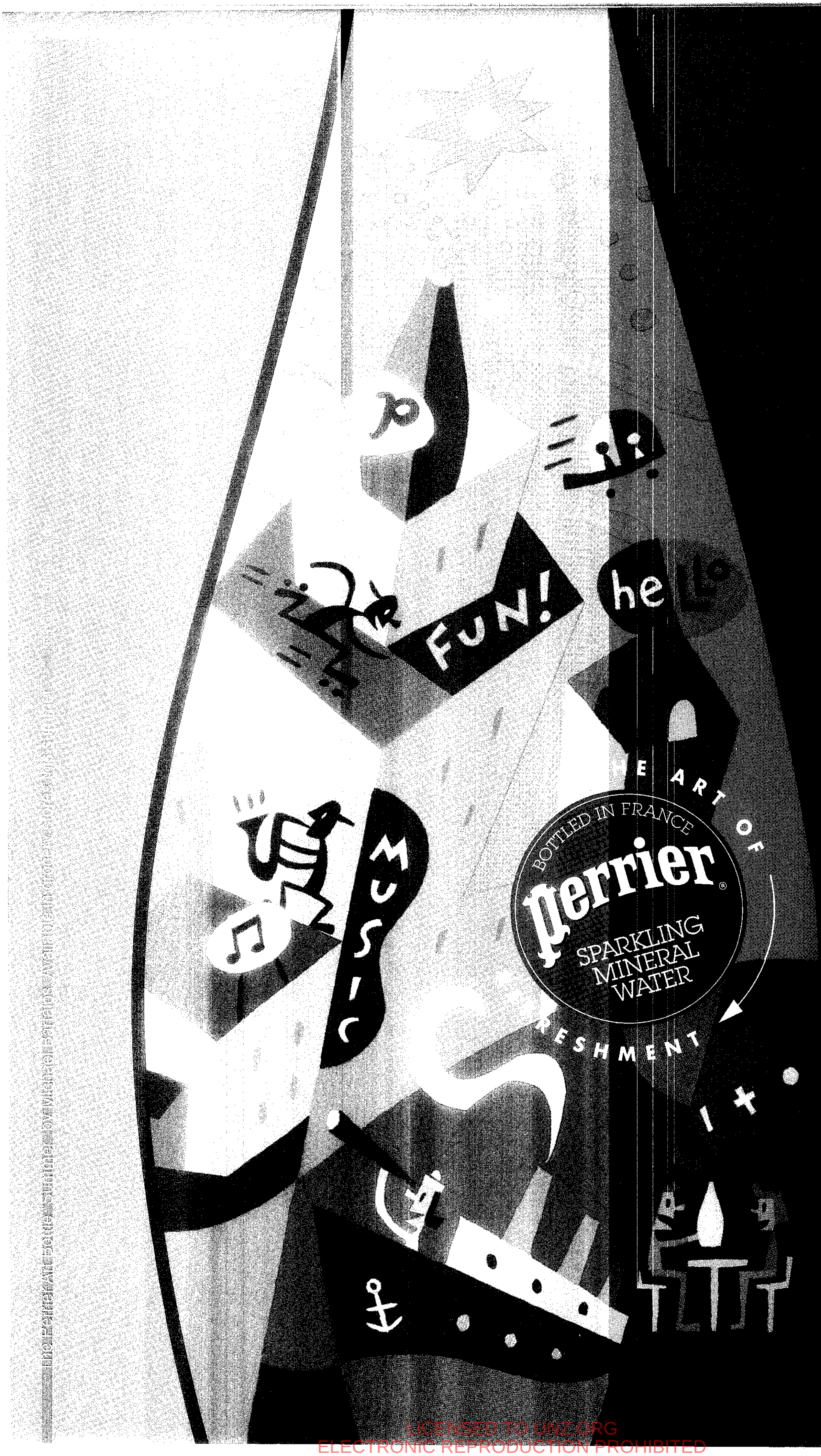
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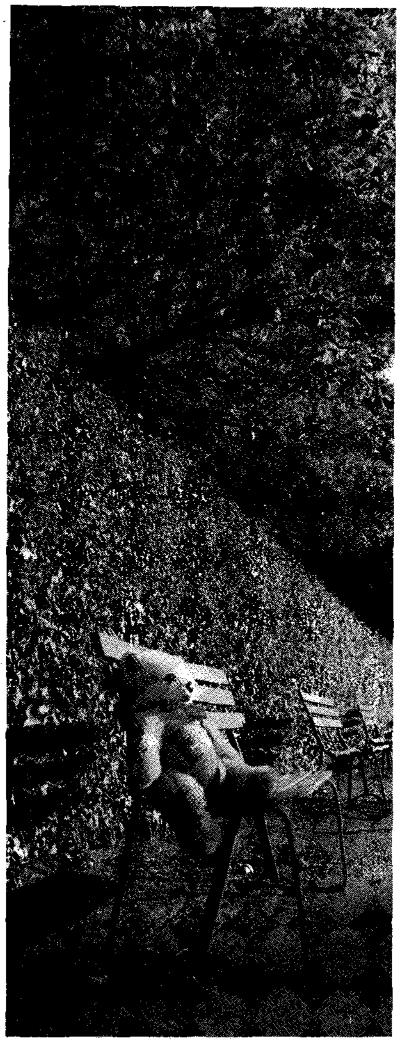

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COMMENT

COOKIE MONSTER

Which book tells us more about the Speaker of the House?

TAKE a look at this passage from "To Renew America," the new volume of political philosophy from Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House:

> Just list some of the changes we are living through: laptop computers, cellular telephones, molecular medicine, new discoveries about the dinosaurs, home security systems that talk, composite materials that make cars lighter, microengineering, manufacturing in space, high-definition television, the video store—the list goes on and on.

Does any particular item jump out at you? Well, there's the talking-home-security-system thing, which adds a sinister note to the passage's generally sunny tone of techno-celebration. ("IN-TRU-DER DE-TECT-ED," one imagines such a system saying in a synthesized monotone, and, seconds later, "IN-TRU-DER TER-MIN-A-TED.") But the real jumper on the list, the item that comes cartwheeling off the page, is, of course, "new discoveries about the dinosaurs." What in the world is *that* doing there, amid the laptops and cell phones?

"To Renew America" consists mostly of policy prescriptions, attacks on whiny liberal élites, and encomiums for the Contract with America, and in these respects it has nothing to say that is not by now numbingly familiar. But it does offer glimpses of a couple of curious—and, truth be told, rather winning—aspects of the personality of the country's second most powerful public official. The dinosaur obsession is one.

As every parent knows, little boys love dinosaurs, because dinosaurs are big—bigger than mom and dad, bigger than school, bigger than just about anything, come to think of it, except Big Government. Gingrich mentions more than once that before he discovered politics he was planning to be a vertebrate paleontologist ("specializing in dinosaurs") when he grew up. Charmingly, he has retained his enthusiasm for the extinct giants into middle age. In addition to including breakthroughs in dinosaur research on his list of futuristic wonders, he specifies "people interested in dinosaurs" as a prime example of who might benefit from his education proposals. And he boasts, "I have a Tyrannosaurus rex skull

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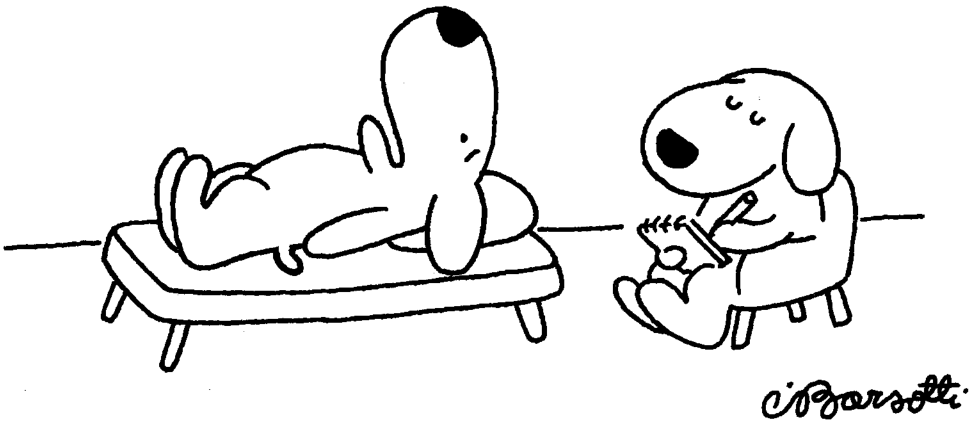

"They moved my bowl."

• •

in the Speaker's office." Awesome.

"To Renew America" offers copious evidence that Gingrich has also held on to another of his youthful interests: science fiction. The two works that "had a profound influence in my life," he recounts in some detail, were Arnold Toynbee's "A Study of History" (no surprise there) and "Foundation," Isaac Asimov's epic trilogy about the decline and fall of the Galactic Empire—a series that, as Gingrich rightly notes, "remains one of the classics of science fiction." Farther on in "To Renew America" Gingrich devotes almost all of a chapter on science policy to sci-fi lit-crit. He asserts that his generation "is still seeking its Jules Verne or H. G. Wells," attacks his fellow dinosaur maven Michael Crichton for writing stories that are "just standard alarmist environmentalism," praises Arthur C. Clarke for having a "positive vision," and reflects on the differences between the movies "The Right Stuff" and "Star Wars."

Perhaps it is Gingrich's passion for fantasy that makes his other book of the summer, the novel "1945," several orders of magnitude more interesting than "To Renew America," which, after all, is mostly Beltway boilerplate. "1945" is an example of "alternate history" fiction, a subgenre of science fiction in which the author speculates on what the world might be like if some historical event had turned out differently. Like Philip K. Dick's "The Man in the High Castle," which is the recognized classic of the subgenre, "1945" has as its premise that Germany won the Second World War. In "1945," a triumphant Hitler squares off against a United States that has defeated Japan but has stayed away from Europe.

"1945" is a mess, of course, but it could be a lot worse. Newt Gingrich the novelist is to Philip K. Dick as Bill Clinton the tenor-saxophone player is to Sonny Rollins—awful, but more entertaining than you might expect. The difference between Clinton and Gingrich is that when the President dons his shades and picks up his horn he has to play his riffs himself, whereas the Speaker has a co-author—a genre veteran named William R. Forstchen—and a "technical editor," Albert S. Hanser. The writing produced by this team is standard guy-stuff pulpese. "The high-pitched stutter of a *Schmeisser* cut short the deeper rattle of the heavy machine gun," you read, and "Like a demon raptor deprived of its prey"—dinosaurs again—"the gunship pulled up and disappeared into the night." That sort of thing.

The tabloids have done their best to wring something salacious out of the three or four sentences in "1945" devoted to sex. But even the gorgeous Swedish Nazi-spy mistress of the White House chief of staff doesn't come across with much more than a "lethal pout"; and "He stirred at the movement of her fingers, which were no longer on his chest" is as steamy as it gets. When it comes to violence, however, Gingrich makes Time Warner look like a magazine company. The climax of "1945" is a lovingly described, incredibly bloody German commando raid on America's secret A-bomb installation at Oak Ridge. In the battle, General of the Army George C. Marshall personally hoses away several Nazis with an M1 carbine and a machine pistol, and the bad guys are finally routed by—Timothy McVeigh please note—a ragtag citizens' militia, led by none other than Sergeant York, the combat hero of the First World War, now a sheriff in rural Tennessee. First, though, Gingrich lingers over the sadistic pleasures enjoyed by a particularly brutal SS officer:

> Richer popped the magazine out of his Luger as he gazed tenderly down at the half-dozen girls he had just talked out of their hiding place and then killed. It had felt so wonderfully good, especially when the extremely pretty one started to cry as, after first forcing them to kneel, he systematically shot her five friends, one after the other. [And] after she learned what was going to happen to her, she begged to be shot like the rest.

Three pages of mayhem later, Richer, wounded and helpless, is taken prisoner by the militiamen. One of York's comrades, a fellow-sheriff, toys with the German a bit and then calmly fires a load of buckshot into his testicles. "They left Richer lying there, his groin a red mass," Gingrich writes. "He was still alive, but he wasn't having any fun." Add rhymes and a thumping beat, and—presto!—a brand-new musical genre for Senator Dole to deplore: Speaka Rap.

In political debate, Gingrich often displays the qualities of a clever, if slightly maladjusted, teen-age boy. When he is in one of his combative moods, he is insolent, sarcastic, self-righteous, narcissistic, and allergic to understatement. He loves catching people out, and dismisses criticism as unfair and motivated by malice or envy. As he shows in "1945," far more clearly than in "To Renew America," he also has more than his share of the exuberance and imagination (to say nothing of the aesthetics) of adolescence. Or perhaps it goes back further than that. "At heart," he writes in the final chapter of "To Renew America," "I am still a happy four-year-old who gets up every morning hoping to find a cookie that friends or relatives may have left for me somewhere." After devouring "1945," however, the reader who encounters cookies may be inclined to toss them.

—HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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IN THE MAIL

BLOOMSBERRIES

When I read Janet Malcolm's article about Bloomsbury ("A House of One's Own," June 5th), I was, needless to say, very upset. There is much in Malcolm's lively and illuminating article which is devastatingly true, but she never took the trouble to try to understand the situation I was in. She confronts my small book with the whole weight of Bloomsbury and, naturally, finds me wanting. It is rather like comparing the crusty loaf that has come out of the oven with the piece of dough that has not yet been put in. She cannot see that my book was inspired not only by resentment but also by a vital urge to survive—and that it took a good deal of courage to write. I wrote it unconscious of my resentment, and I think that, in spite of this, there is quite a lot of love and affection in the book, in passages that Malcolm did not quote. From Malcolm's point of view I have had a shot at my elders and betters from a safe position and have produced no more than a tiny poisoned arrow. Perhaps, but I suffered from a deprivation as difficult to describe as it was to recover from, and to produce any kind of arrow was something of a triumph.

I agree that I was not "of" Bloomsbury. But why should I be? Surely it is both natural and healthy to be of one's own time, and it was because health had not entirely deserted me that I was able to recover from my childhood. The eight years between Quentin and me made a huge difference: he was old enough to experience Bloomsbury at the height of its vitality, living with artists who were breaking new ground; on the contrary, I inhabited a nursery with an ultraconventional, timid nurse, in a London where my parents were out for most of the day. A measured temperament and an immense capacity to learn and reflect, in addition to an exceptional intelligence, have helped Quentin in his life's work. I admire him immensely for it and am grateful both to him and to Olivier for the spirit of selflessness and integrity with which they have accomplished their mission. But I do not think it was a bad thing, even at the risk of showing myself up, to point to the more shadowy side of Bloomsbury. If I have left an indelible stain, it only covers an idealized picture of the past.

ANGELICA GARNETT
Forcalquier, France

MORE MAPPLETHORPE

What Peter Conrad tries to pass off as a review of Patricia Morrisroe's biography of Robert Mapplethorpe (Books, June 5th) is actually a puzzlingly mean-spirited rant, in which he seems intent on trashing not only Mapplethorpe but photography in general. Anyone who claims that photography "serves as a medium of last resort for those who would like to be artists but have no particular talent" is either unfamiliar with photography or simply interested in making brash, rude statements. Conrad's "review" gives us very little valuable information about either Morrisroe's book or its subject. Instead, rather unsatisfactorily, it gives us an unpleasant taste of Conrad's cattiness.

CHRISTOPHER MAHONEY
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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16	17	18				

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Bonhoeffer 1945—The views of the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed for his role in an assassination plot against Hitler, are set forth in this drama by D. Paul Thomas, which takes place in the Wehrmacht Military Prison. Previews begin July 14. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

Lust—From London, a musical version of William Wycherley's "The Country Wife," with Denis Lawson reprising his role as Horner. Book, music, and lyrics by the Heather brothers—Neil, Lea, John, and Charles. Two previews on July 12. Opens July 13 at 7:15. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

The Nightwatch—Three Irish performers—Anto Howard, Fionn Davenport, and Helen James—play watchmen at work in Dublin, in an encore production of Mr. Howard's comic play. Opens July 13 at 8. (Camilla's, 44 Walker St. 925-9456.)

2 Boys in a Bed on a Cold Winter's Night—Michael Curry and Robert Gomes are the boys in James Edwin Parker's new play, which begins in the middle of a one-night stand. In previews through July 15. Opens July 16 at 7. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 279-4200.)

Two Men Poised—Jay Reiss's comic Western, in which two brothers are about to have a showdown over a woman who would rather be in Paris, runs July 13-15 as the second offering in SoHo Think Tank's Ice Factory Festival. The festival continues through August 5. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 560-7387.)

OPENED RECENTLY

After-Play—Anne Meara's comedy, about two couples who get together for an after-theatre dinner, shows a real ear for the rhythms of conversation and the dynamics between couples who have known each other forever. Ms. Meara, Merwin Goldsmith, Larry Keith, and the droll Barbara Barrie—old pros all—make a believable and entertaining foursome. Directed by David Saint. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/13/95.) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

Arcadia—Despite some casting glitches, the American première of Tom Stoppard's 1993 play, which shuttles between 1809 and the present, is an elegant production of an enormous theatrical feat. In a kind of intellectual mystery story, Stoppard provides the audience with the exhilarating illusion of omniscience, allowing us to solve a riddle of history from clues and connections that the characters, caught in time, do not see. Directed by Trevor Nunn. (4/17/95) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Buttons on Broadway—A two-hour jaunt down memory lane with Red Buttons, who, at seventy-six, has proclaimed himself the oldest living burlesque comic. He's no fossil, though—in this age of irony, his shticky routines are refreshingly funny. When he pulls his hat down over his eyes and sings his trademark "Sam, You Made the Pants Too Long," he makes you long for the time when a joke was just a joke. (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Closes July 16.)

Chronicle of a Death Foretold—Lincoln Center Theatre presents a musical adaptation of Gabriel García Márquez's novel, directed and choreographed by Graciela Daniele. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes July 16.)

Damn Yankees—Jerry Lewis, the King of Comedy and the King of France, is now, in his Broadway début, the Prince of Darkness—the Devil himself. The old pro delivers the goods. And Charlotte d'Amboise, a sensational Lola, delivers the goods and then some. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Death Blues—In his new solo piece, Dudley Saunders uses fantastic tales to convey the anxiety of trying to survive the AIDS epidemic. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088. Closes July 29.)

Death Defying Acts—Three subpar one-act comedies, by David Mamet, Elaine May, and Woody Allen, that have the words "Written to Order" stamped all over them. (3/20/95) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

The Donahue Sisters—In Geraldine Aron's thin comedy-drama, three siblings—a homebody, an addled London housewife, and a jaded New York writer—gather at their family's home in Ireland for some sisterly sniping, a huge joint, and a few snorts of vodka. At the very end they recall a childhood atrocity; the revelation is so sudden and unexpected that when the house lights come up you wonder whether they're going to go back down for another act. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

Ecstasy—Mike Leigh's play has reopened at a new theatre. It's set in a dismal North London flat in the winter of 1979, and like some of his movies it has the kind of grungy bed-sitter realism in which light bulbs are always bare and the top sheet never matches the bottom one. The late-seventies costumes and set are depressingly perfect, and the actors bring the six working-class characters to life with great specificity and vitality. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf—Ntozake Shange directed this twentieth-anniversary production of her consciousness-raising play about black womanhood in America, a work that features seven women telling stories about hope, anger, and love in the face of pain, and incorporates prose, poetry, and dance. It's still so fresh that after two decades it seems like it was written yesterday. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 279-4200. Closes July 16.)

Grandma Sylvia's Funeral—The audience is part of the group of mourners in this comedy, which is set in a Jewish mortuary. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555.)

Hamlet—London's Almeida Theatre has brought over a postmodern production whose refusal to risk interpretation reflects Britain's current bland and winded state. Ralph Fiennes seems almost as unwilling to enter the vortex of Hamlet's torment as Hamlet himself is to take action. But his performance is a stylish event; he radiates an elegance of spirit that rivets the audience with its sense of unspoken mystery. Directed by Jonathan Kent. (5/15/95) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Closes July 22.)

Having Our Say—Sadie and Bessie Delany, two sisters who have passed the hundred-year mark, presented their vivid life stories in a 1993 best-seller; the book has been adapted beautifully from the page to the stage by Emily Mann, who also directed. Gloria Foster and Mary Alice are brilliant as the sisters, who, taught by their family to "reach high" despite the dogging of Jim Crow, became a teacher and a dentist. The show is both a portrait of a remarkable relationship and an unsentimental depiction of service, accomplishment, and pride. (4/24/95) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Heiress—A revival of Ruth and Augustus Goetz's 1947 adaptation of Henry James's "Washington Square," directed by Gerald Gutierrez, that is emotionally brimming and, thanks to several memorable performances, alive with tension. Cherry Jones, who plays the title character, is exquisitely—almost unbearably—vulnerable. And the wonderful Frances Sternhagen is, not surprisingly, touching and funny as a widowed aunt. (3/20/95) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying—In this revival of Frank Loesser's 1961 musical, Matthew Broderick has polish and timing, but it's Lillias White's gospel solo in "Brotherhood of Man" that lifts the audience into a zone of joy. As a paradigm for the Broadway musical's con game—winning the public's heart while picking its pocket—her display of guile made glorious is as good as it gets. (4/24/95) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Indiscretions—The brightest spot in this production of Jean Cocteau's "Les Parents Terribles"—a dark comedy about the perversities of desire in family life—is Eileen Atkins, who plays a severely wise spinster with her usual magnetic minimalism. Kathleen Turner, as a hysterically possessive mother, is an unfocussed sprawl with a distractingly unplaceable accent. Roger Rees, Cynthia Nixon, and Jude Law also star, under the direction of Sean Mathias, in this import from London's Royal National Theatre. (5/15/95) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Lady-Like—Laura Shamas's drama about the love affair between two women, Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, who fled Ireland in 1778 to live together in Wales. Laura Jane Salvato, Angela McKinney, and Jenny Bash make up the cast. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 741-6436. Closes July 24.)

London Suite—Neil Simon knows how to cater to his audience, but he's serving leftovers: these four one-acts are painfully dated in both their substance and their execution. The main pleasure in this production is Carole Shelley, who provides some much needed comic muscle tone. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Lonely Planet—A two-man play about life under the threat of AIDS, in which an anxious map-shop owner (Mark Shannon) and his wisecracking friend (Denis O'Hare) stave off despair with humor and convivial jiving. The playwright, Steven Dietz, loads the play with cumbersome metaphors, but by the end he has achieved a tender tone that conveys the fortifying nature of the pair's friendship. Michael McGarty designed the set (which gradually fills up with empty chairs); Leonard Foglia directed. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200.)

Loose Lips—A comedy revue, featuring the National Transcript Players, based on records of spoken blunders by the Prince of Wales, Clarence Thomas, President Clinton, and other public figures. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Love! Valour! Compassion!—The eight gay men in Terrence McNally's beautifully written drama connect in ways that almost any nuclear family would envy. Under the nimble direction of Joe Mantello, the actors present humbling evidence of what love is and can be. (11/14/94) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

One Woman Shoe—The brother-and-sister writing team of David and Amy Sedaris bill themselves as the Talent Family, and it's a rare case of truth in advertising. In this encore production of their hilariously absurd show, three women who embody all possible facets of cluelessness are told by their social-services caseworker (played to Franklin Pangbornian perfection by David Rakoff) that they must put on one-woman shows in order to keep their benefit checks coming. The five cast members are all funny in a number of roles, but Ms. Sedaris, with her chipmunk's overbite and her remarkably plastic face, is extraordinary—she burns her way into your memory with a comic branding iron. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

The Only Thing Worse You Could Have Told Me . . .—Dan Butler offers a procession of characters from the real world of contemporary gay culture, moving seamlessly from one monologue to the next in a one-man show that is by turns hilarious, infuriating, sad, and uplifting—a charmer. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 307-4100.)

EILEEN TRAVELL

Patrick Stewart and Aunjanue Ellis, in "The Tempest," in Central Park.

Party—Seven gay men get together to play a strip version of truth or dare, with terrifically funny (if occasionally didactic) results. The characters in David Dillon's comedy are stereotypes, more or less, but the solid cast makes them believable, and in the end you've had a look at some enduring friendships (and some nice bodies). (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)

The Play's the Thing—J. Smith-Cameron is a singer, Jay Goede is her composer fiancé, and Peter Frechette is a playwright who tries to keep them together, in Ferenc Molnár's comedy, which, in this adaptation by P. G. Wodehouse, had its Broadway première in 1926. Directed by Gloria Muzio. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Repertorio Español—Two shows are currently running in repertory: ". . . Y Se Armó la Mojiganga!" (". . . And the Carnival Erupted!"), a musical conceived and directed by Jorge Alí Triana, with a score by German Arrieta, and "Café con Leche," a comedy by Gloria Gonzalez. Performances are in Spanish with simultaneous English translation. (Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850.)

Rob Becker's Defending the Caveman—A hundred-minute standup routine. Some of Becker's examples of discontent between the sexes are very funny (a lot of vigorous nodding goes on in the theatre—never by men and women at the same time), but a fair number of them are shopworn. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller—A feast of early rock and roll, performed by a cast with Grade A lungs and legs. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

The Springhill Singing Disaster—Karen Trott's one-woman show is an affectionate (but never sappy) coming-of-age story about a girl and her guitar, who are constant companions from the fourth grade on, and it's refreshingly unhip. Trott has a good, folkie voice, but she isn't above sending up her younger, off-key self. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Sunset Boulevard—Betty Buckley takes on the monumental role of Norma Desmond, in Andrew Lloyd Webber's homage to Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett's 1950 fable of Hollywood corruption and dementia. (12/5/94) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007.)

Swingtime Canteen—A re-creation of a 1944 U.S.O. concert, performed in a night club. Extraneous bits of plot threaten to derail the show, but the lovely songs, done with verve and charm, carry the day. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Sylvia—In A. R. Gurney's new comedy, Sarah Jessica Parker, as a dog named Sylvia (who says there aren't roles for women?), brings meaning to the life of a middle-aged currency trader (John Cunningham) while driving a canine-shaped wedge between him and his wife (Mariette Hartley). Parker has some funny moments: you should hear what she says when she sees a cat, and her attempt to mate with a matronly guest (Derek Smith, in a good drag turn) is hilarious. But this upper-middle-class fairy tale settles too soon into a monotonous sweetness; it lacks bite. John Tillinger directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

The Tempest—The summer's initial New York Shakespeare Festival production, directed by George C. Wolfe and starring Patrick Stewart as Prospero, employs elements of puppetry, dance, circus spectacle, and African-Caribbean music. Bill Irwin and John Pankow are also in the cast, as Trinculo and Stephano. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277. Closes July 19.)

The Tempest—The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival version, directed by Thomas Nahrwold, continues through July 23. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 1-914 265-9575.)

Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind—The Neo-Futurists, a troupe from Chicago, perform thirty original two-minute plays—"Eating Japanese Alone Midtown About 7 on a Monday: A Madrigal for Four," "Power Men Talk About Their Day," "Fruits and Flashlights," to name a few works from their repertoire of more than two thousand—in one hour. They change the program each night, and when there's a full house, they order a pizza. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 330-8087.)

Travels with My Aunt—Giles Havergal, directing his own witty adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, has captured the book's amusingly puzzled tone with his playful, inventive (though overlong) staging. Four wildly different actors all play Henry Pulling, the staid retired banker whose eccentric Aunt Augusta drags him into her international adventures. Jim Dale doubles as Aunt Augusta, and the other three skillfully handle some twenty additional parts. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 420-8000.)

Troy—In Dominic Orlando's new play, a caged, amnesiac American M.I.A. dreams that he is Odysseus. Presented by the No-Pants Theatre Company. (Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. 673-3852. Closes July 16.)

Twelve Dreams—A revival of James Lapine's 1981 play, which he adapted from Carl Jung's case study of a young girl whose dreams portended her own death. It doesn't add up to much, but the dream sequences are a striking amalgam of the everyday and the surreal, and the performances—especially those of nine-year-old Mischa Barton, who is poised and moving as the dreamer, and Jan Rubeš, as a European professor—are strong. Also with Harry Groener, Donna Murphy, and Kathleen Chalfant. Directed by Mr. Lapine. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP / TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . .

GREASE!: Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **THREE TALL WOMEN:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

IN TOWN

"L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato"—The Mark Morris Dance Group performs an evening-length work set to the Handel oratorio. (New York State Theatre. 721-6500. July 12-15 at 8.)

Pilobolus Dance Theatre—July 12-13 and July 15 at 8: "Collideoscope," "Masters of Ceremony," "Animundi," "Walklyndon," and "Day Two." . . . ¶ July 14 and July 17 at 8 and July 15 at 2: "The Particle Zoo," "Duet," "Quatrejeux," "Pyramid of the Moon" (première), and "Sweet Purgatory." . . . ¶ July 18 at 8: "The Doubling Cube," a solo from "The Empty Suitor," "Shizen," and "Rejoyce." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Aug. 4.)

Tere O'Connor Dance / Bill Young & Dancers—The six dancers of the O'Connor company perform the choreographer's "Notes on Shame"; then the Young troupe dances "Kindling." (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 14 at 8:30.)

Dances for Wave Hill—Choreographer Victoria Marks and accordionist Guy Klucevsek, and the dance company Kipos (that's Greek for garden) open the annual summer dance festival with site-specific works choreographed for several locations in the garden. (W. 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. For information, call 1-718 549-3200. July 12 at 6:30 and July 16 at 5.)

Noche Flamenca—The eight singers, dancers, and musicians from Madrid bring their traditional percussive steps to a venue just down the block from "Stomp." (80 St. Marks Pl. 924-0077. July 12-16 at 8. Through July 30.)

"Classical Ballet at Fort Tryon Park"—The Anglo-American Ballet company performs excerpts from "Les Sylphides," "Polka Essence," and "La Fille Mal Gardée." (Anne Loftus Playground, Broadway at Dyckman St. July 18 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

New York City Ballet—July 12 at 8:15: "Swan Lake," "The Four Temperaments," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ July 13 at 2: "Swan Lake," "Romeo and Juliet," "Ash," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ July 13 at 8:15: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Sinfonia," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," and "Glass Pieces." . . . July 14 at 8:15: "Square Dance," "The Four Temperaments," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ July 15 at 2: "Swan Lake," "Ash," "Romeo and Juliet," and "The Four Seasons." . . . ¶ July 15 at 8:15: "Barber Violin Concerto," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "2 & 3 Part Inventions," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ July 18 at 8:15: "Chaconne," "Adams Violin Concerto," and "Glass Pieces." (Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 1-518 587-3330.)

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—July 12-13 at 8, July 14 at 8:30, and July 15 at 2 and 8:30: Parsons Dance Company. . . . ¶ July 12 at 6:30, July 13 at 7, July 14 at 8, July 15 at 5, and July 16 at 7: Liz Lerman Dance Exchange. . . . ¶ July 13 at 6:30 and July 15 at 7: Avila / Weeks Dance. . . . ¶ July 18 at 8: Toronto Dance Theatre. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

Wired

With his long blond dreadlocks and his laid-back Southern California air, Jaron Lanier seems more like a musician than like the inventor of virtual reality. That may be because Lanier *is* a musician. On July 17, the thirty-five-year-old former prodigy will help kick off the Macintosh New York Music Festival, a weeklong salute to technology and rock and roll which will welcome more than three hundred acts into fifteen local clubs. Lanier—who will appear at the Knitting Factory, with ex-Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid—has a record out called "Instruments of Change," and he recently phoned to talk about what he'll do onstage. "I'll be playing a bunch of rare instruments: the *khæn*"—an Asian bamboo mouth organ—"and a few other things that look good in print," he said. "But I'm particularly fond of an exotic Western instrument called the piano." Lanier and Reid will play what they call trip-hop, a mixture of world music and funk, which, he says, "has nothing to do with virtual reality."

Other cyberpunks scheduled to appear include Laurie Anderson (at the Knitting Factory on July 19), Todd Rundgren (at Irving Plaza on July 20), Cop Shoot Cop (who will bring their industrial noise to Irving Plaza on July 21), the kitschy postmodern duo Cibo Matto (at CBGB on July 22), and Yo La Tengo (who will wind up the festival with a free performance on July 23 in Union Square Park). Admission to all the venues is available via a pay-one-price badge. And for anyone who's too cool for the physical world, a few gigs will be broadcast live, on the Internet. (For information about the festival, which continues through July 23, call 343-9290.)

CONCERTS

"A Grand Night for Singing"—Barbara Carroll, Maureen McGovern, Margaret Whiting, and others perform the songs of Oscar Hammerstein. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. July 12 at 6.)

Klezmer Extravaganza—Featuring the Klezmatics and four other klezmer combos. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. July 12 at 8.)

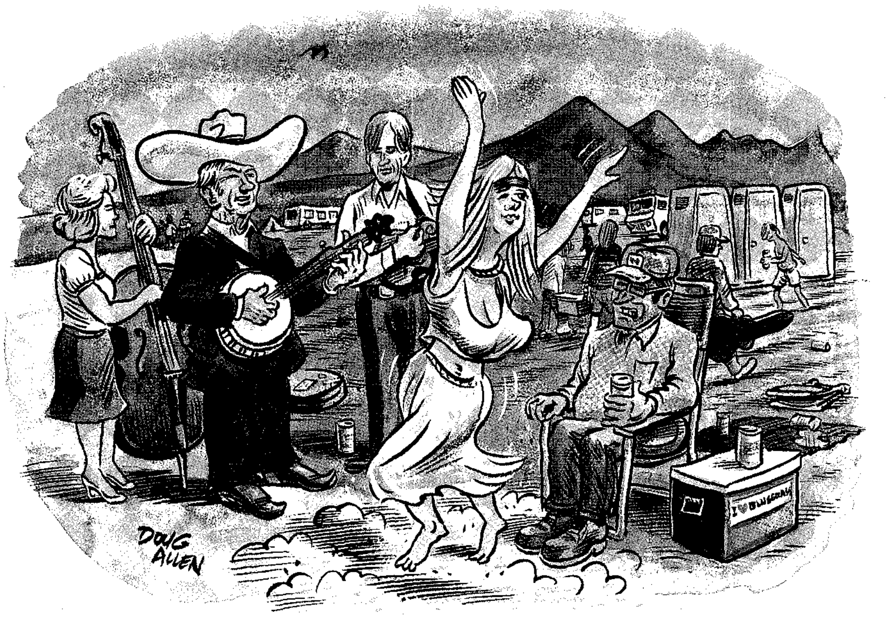
Barry White—It was the early seventies when he sang, "I'm never ever gonna quit, 'cause quittin' just ain't my shtick." What *was* his shtick was schmaltzy pillow talk as outsized as he was—"Can't Get Enough of Your Love, Babe," "I'm Gonna Love You Just a Little Bit More, Baby"—and the gargantuan instrumental "Love's Theme." And he hasn't quit: on his recent No. 1 hit, "Practice What You Preach," the leader of the Love Unlimited Orchestra is still living large. With Chante Moore. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. July 12 and July 14-15 at 8. . . . ¶ Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. July 16 at 8.)

Ringo Starr—A rock-and-roll revue with John Entwistle, Billy Preston, Felix Cavaliere, and Zak Starkey (Ringo's son). (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. July 12 at 8.)

White Zombie—They look like they just crashed through the screen of "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome." They sound like it, too. The band's new album, "Astro-Creep: 2,000 Songs of Love, Destruction and Other Synthetic Delusions of the Electric Head" picks up right where its 1992 shock-rocking predecessor, "La Sexorcisto: Devil Music, Volume 1," left off. The musical carnage is as unrelenting as an "Evil Dead" marathon—and almost as much twisted fun. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. July 13 at 8.)

The Nudes—Singer-guitarist Walter Parks met cellist-vocalist Stephanie Winters through a *Village Voice* ad a few years back, and together they formed the tallest duo in pop. The band played their first gig in 1991; they've been making beautiful, jazz-inflected folk music ever since. (South Cove, Battery Park City. No tickets necessary. For information, call 267-9700. July 13 at 7.)

Winterhawk Bluegrass Festival—Four days of low-down Appalachian fun, upstate New York-style, including performances by violinist Mark O'Connor, mandolinist Sam Bush, and banjo master Bill Keith. Expect square dancing, bluegrass karaoke, parkin'-lot pickin', free ice, and a full range of arts and crafts. (Rothvoss Farm, Ancramdale, N.Y. For information about tickets, call 1-513 390-6211. July 13-16.)



DOUG ALLEN

Good times at the Winterhawk Bluegrass Festival.

Pat Metheny—At forty, the graying guitarist no longer rules the jazz charts: after more than a dozen years at the top, Metheny has been usurped by Kenny G. But, unlike Kenny G., Metheny is an unpredictable, boundary-breaking musician. Over the past two decades, he's recorded with David Bowie, Ornette Coleman, Joni Mitchell, Herbie Hancock, Steve Reich, and his own award-winning group. His new album, "We Live Here," is his twentieth, and as with all his work, from his knotty free-jazz excursions to his fragile acoustic collages, the thread that holds it together is his buttery guitar, a purr that remains one of the most instantly identifiable voices in contemporary music. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. July 14 at 8.)

Freedy Johnston—This young singer-songwriter from Kansas writes remarkably tough, haunting songs—his recent album, "This Perfect World," was a gem. He brings a country-punk spirit to folk-rock music and has already attracted the kind of audience that also enjoys Nirvana. (Central Park Summer-Stage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary. July 15 at 3.)

Sarah McLachlan / The Chieftans—Though she's just in her twenties, McLachlan is a throwback to the days when female singers weren't expected to cuss like truck drivers. Her wistful techno-folk may be more earnest than exciting, but her ghostly voice and her thoughtful delivery are charming. For this show, she'll be joined, and borne aloft, by the great Irish folk band. (Jones Beach Theatre. July 15 at 8.)

Black 47—The Celtic rock band. With Susan McKeown and the Chanting House. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park, Brooklyn. For information, call 1-718 855-7882. July 15 at 3.)

Pointer Sisters / Kool & the Gang—Westbury Music Fair. 1-516 334-0800. July 16 at 8.

New York Pops—Conductor Skitch Henderson leads the gang in a tribute to the American musical. With Victor Borge. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. No tickets necessary. July 17 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Academy, 234 W. 43rd St.—July 18: **cyndi lauper.** It's been eleven years since "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," "Time After Time," and "Money Changes Everything," and these titles now read like painfully ironic commentary. Lauper soldiers on, the sine qua non of eighties kitsch, but without her flaming red hair and her helium hiccups, she sounds oddly like Doris Day. (For concert information, call 307-7171.)

Blarney Star, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Decent sight lines, great greasy food, prodigiously talented waitresses, and a consistent roster of high-quality acts. July 18: **x,** the group once deemed "the most influential band to come out of Los Angeles," is back. The band's terrific new live album, "Unclogged," is an acoustic tour through fifteen years of punkabilly treats, and it captures John Doe and Exene Cervenka's off-kilter harmonies as never before. **jill sobule,** a particularly gifted singer-songwriter, is the opener.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (429-8392)—**catherine** rocks on July 17.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small peach-walled storefront usually given over to a young sandals-and-socks sort of crowd. July 12: The country-rock sound of **steeplejack.**

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Rock and roll always sounds best in a dump, which may be why this legendary club is still thriving. July 15: The **bush tetras.** . . . ¶ Next door, at CB's Gallery, **dan zanes** entertains on July 18.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. July 14-15: **otis clay.**

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel dungeon deep in the heart of the meat district. Tuesday nights are given over to experimental d.j. spinoffs.

Downtime, 251 W. 30th St. (695-2747)—A friendly split-level bar with a dazzling quasi-Cubist paint job and an above-average pool table.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **dressing room divas** are in the house every Friday night.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. July 12: Singer-songwriter **richard barone,** formerly of the Bongos. July 17: **innocence mission, candy butchers,** and **katell keineg.** July 18: It's faux-lounge night, with **black velvet flag** and the **squirrel nut zippers.** The **mingus big band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. July 14: **warren zevon.** July 15: **urban blight,** an R. & B. septet with a devoted, happy following up and down the Eastern Seaboard. This will be your last chance to see the band in a club until the fall. July 17: **railroad jerk.** July 18: **emergency broadcast network.** . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Kaptain Banana, 101 Greene St. (343-9000)—Gender juggler **joey arias** performs on Wednesdays through Fridays. Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—July 17: An evening with virtual-reality man **jaron lanier** and former Living Colour guitarist **vernon reid.**

Limelight, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. July 18: Loud noise with **die warzau** and **sister machine gun.** Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

Ludlow Street Café, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—An unassuming basement restaurant-bar, where you can drink cheap and catch live music nightly. Mondays belong to **beat rodeo,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Many of the bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. July 15: **jill sobule** warms up for her Bottom Line gig. July 16: **x** swings over before *their* show at the Bottom Line.

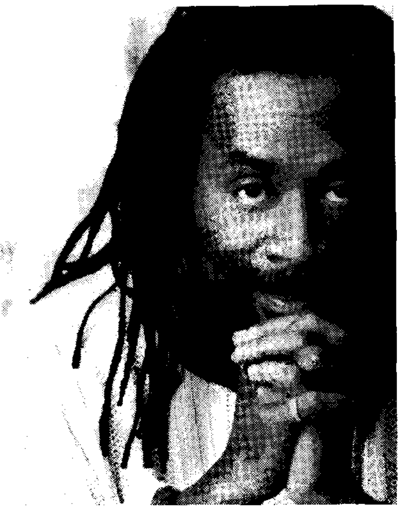
Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Past the long bar, you'll find an exposed-brick room and a stage packed with some very hip rock acts. July 14: **alaska,** featuring former dB **chris stamey.**

Nell's, 246 W. 14th St. (675-1567)—A Victorian-style club, home to an eclectic crowd of downtown youngsters dancing to throbbing funk and techno-pop.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, a buffalo head blows smoke through its nostrils, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing. Sundays belong to the **flying neutrinos.**

Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. (247-0200)—Ballroom dancing on Thursdays and Sundays. The rest of the week it's another dark, sweaty rock club, with flannel-clad stage divers and the occasional whirling mosh pit.



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COCONUTS®
MUSIC & MOVIES

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—This spacious and agreeable club offers a consistent lineup of A-list talent. July 14: Blues with **Walter (Wolfman) Washington.** July 15: **Kid Creole and the Coconuts.**

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—The **Screaming Cheetah Wheelies** light up this vast environmentally friendly club on July 13, followed by the funky **Milo Z** on July 14.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **Phillip Officer** is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, Fridays and Saturdays to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through July 16: the **Duke Ellington** orchestra, directed by **Mercer Ellington.** Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—July 14-15: Guitarist **Allan Holdsworth,** who was tapping the frets long before Eddie Van Halen. Holdsworth is a guitarist's guitarist: his harmonic knowledge gives most rockers a migrane. He remains an elegant stylist who routinely does the impossible. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—In Bemelmans Bar, **Peter Mintun** is currently at the piano. A genuine throwback to a gentler time, this elegant performer specializes in curios from the twenties and thirties like "Kitten on the Keys," but he has also been known to play cartoon theme songs if the mood (or the crowd) warrants it. Agreeable and reassuring without being over-gracious, he's sort of a curio himself.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—Through July 16: vocalist **Laverne Butler.** On July 18, **Panama Francis & the Savoy Six** begin a six-night run. In the thirties, Francis led the swingingest band that ever hit the Savoy Ballroom. You can still feel that effervescent pulse in his every move. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **Les Paul** leads a trio. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Wednesdays through Saturdays, Donald Johnston is the featured pianist. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—Set in a mammoth turn-of-the-century ballroom, this jazz club is all marble and gilt, with a few modern touches, such as the zebra-patterned carpet in the V.I.P. room upstairs. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Through July 16: the **Sonny Simmons** trio and the **Geoff Keezer** trio. The **Hilton Ruiz** quartet takes over on July 18.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, and a piano. July 12-15: **Dick Katz** and **Steve La Spina.** With his golden touch and flawless taste, Katz quietly upholds the modern piano tradition; LaSpina makes for a simpatico partner on the bass.

Le Madeleine, 403 W. 43rd St. (246-2993)—Every Sunday evening, guitar great **Gene Bertoncini** lights up this cozy Hell's Kitchen bistro with his simmering melodicism and chordal grace.

Metropolis, 31 Union Sq. W. (675-2300)—The basement of this swank café is now hosting a series of high-profile gigs. Tuesdays are given over to the **George Gee Orchestra,** a seventeen-piece swing band.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the **New Orleans Funeral and Ragtime Orchestra,** a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. Through July 15: the legendary **Anita O'Day.** She was the Gene Krupa band's girl singer back in the early forties and the inspiration for Sugarpuss O'Shea, Barbara Stanwyck's slang-slinging, tough-talking character in the 1942 film "Ball of Fire"—sans the pedicure and the G-string. At seventy-five, she's still singing her old standbys (if she feels like it), though her bright, flat sound is on the muted side these days. But her timing, which was always her greatest asset, is as sure and adventurous as it ever was, and her unvarnished style is terrifically watchable and enlivening. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Michael Andrew and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Sardi's, 234 W. 44th St. (221-8444)—July 14: A cabaret salute to the songs of Lerner and Loewe, with vocalist Christopher Gines.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—A new contender in New York's ever-changing jazz topography, this aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A jazz outpost where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through July 16: the **Billy Hart** sextet. **Ray Anderson & the Alligatory Band** take over on July 18. The **Spirit of Life Ensemble** is in action on Mondays. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room, which resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over-the-top as the rest of the establishment. The **Oliver Jones** trio is in through July 16.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, smells, and feels like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. Through July 16: **Stanley Turrentine.** You judge a tenor player like Turrentine not by his virtuosity or his ideas but by his sound: a gritty, soulful calling card. He recently pledged new allegiance to his jazz roots, and, cleansed of his pop-funk noodling, he's now making quite a show of himself. The **Lou Donaldson** quartet swings in on July 18. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. July 12-15: The **John Abercrombie** trio. The past few years have toughened up Abercrombie's guitar playing. The lyricism that characterized his ECM heyday is still in place; his wispiness, however, has been replaced by bluesy muscle.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through July 16: **Joanne Brackeen** and **Cecil Mc Bee.** Tapping into the contemporary wellspring created by Tyner, Hancock, and Evans, Brackeen has fashioned an engaging personal sound at the piano. Everything she touches, from American songbook standards and Brazilian melodies to her own modernist pieces, is stamped with jazz authority. Like an old married couple, Brackeen and bassist McBee seem to read each other's minds, completing each other's musical sentences.

ART

Ars Poetica

One of the highlights of the spring gallery season was the Philip Guston show at McKee. These lush, frothily sensuous Abstract Expressionist paintings from the fifties offered no hint of Guston's stunning—some might say bizarre—transformation, in the late sixties, into a perpetrator of weird, raw imagery—homunculi, Ku Klux Klansmen, and commonplace objects like clocks, bottles, and ashtrays.

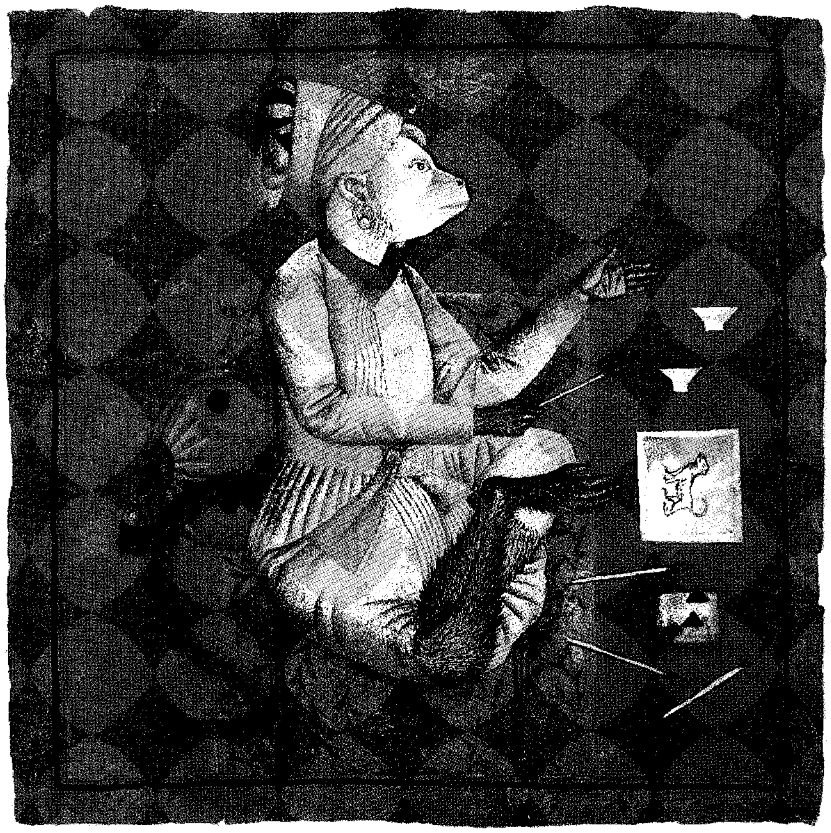
The Drawing Center's current show, "Philip Guston's Poem-Pictures" (35 Wooster Street; through July 28), is a sort of pendant to the McKee show, focussing on one aspect of the artist's late style—his collaborations with poets. In a 1975 letter to Bill Berkson, one of his collaborators, Guston offered some comments about these works, with their "words and images feeding off each other in unpredictable ways. Naturally, there is no 'illustration' of text, yet I am fascinated by how text *and* image bounce into and off each other." Some of the loveliest pieces feature poems by the artist's wife, Musa McKim. In one, a panorama of Guston motifs—a book, a lamp, a hand holding a cigarette—accompanies a laconic little poem: "I thought I would never write anything down again. / Then I put on my cold wristwatch." Clearly, Guston was in tune with the solitary servitude of the writer.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum." The highlight of this splendid loan exhibition is a series of superbly rendered low-relief stone carvings that possess Homeric narrative power and irresistible charm. In one, which shows soldiers swimming across the Euphrates to escape Assyrian archers, the trees on the bank are as vivid as Matisse cutouts. A small companion exhibit, "Assyrian Origins," displays early objects from the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, in Berlin. Both shows through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ "Herter Brothers: Furniture and Interiors for a Gilded Age." Fifty works by the preëminent nineteenth-century cabinetmaking and decorating firm; in conjunction with "Decorating the American Home, 1850-1900," which includes furnishings, pattern books, and catalogues. Both shows through July 30. . . . ¶ The fifty-three paintings, drawings, and watercolors that make up the Annenberg collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterworks are on view. . . . ¶ A display of more than a hundred painted-glass roundels produced in the European Lowlands between 1480 and 1560. Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ "The Seven Deadly Sins," a suite of paintings by Paul Cadmus, is at the center of a small show of his works (another of which is "The Eighth Sin : Jealousy"). Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ "An Egyptian Bestiary," a large non-petting zoo of falcons, baboons, hippos, and ibis, in stone, ivory, gold, bronze, and wood. . . . **Note:** The museum's roof garden is open, when weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—The design exhibitions here are always fun, and

“Mutant Materials,” a handsomely mounted exploration of the way recent technology has transformed industrial design, is one of the best. In what other museum could you find orange fake-fur light-switch covers, Nike sneakers, and a baseball glove on display? It’s impossible, though, to imagine some of these things in anybody’s house. Particularly loathsome is a “seaweed” chair, formed from shreds of fabric in clashing primary colors stiffened with resin and tossed together like a poisonous pasta salad. Many objects, such as a squishy pen that molds to the shape of the user’s fingertips, are displayed on a shelf, where the visitor is invited to palpate them. Through Aug. 27. . . . ¶ “Artist’s Choice: Elizabeth Murray.” A large show of paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints by seventy female artists, including Frida Kahlo, Agnes Martin, Louise Bourgeois, Georgia O’Keeffe, Joan Mitchell, and Eva Hesse. Through Aug. 22. . . . ¶ “Video Spaces: Eight Installations.” Through Sept. 12. . . . ¶ Ten black-and-white photographs by Gilles Peress document the massacres and the refugee camps in Rwanda and Zaire. Through Aug. 1. . . . ¶ The latest in the “projects” series is a video work and an installation by the performance artist Paul McCarthy. Through July 18. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)


“Monkey,” an exhibition at the Asia Society.

PETER MALONE

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A large survey of paintings by the German Neo-Expressionist Georg Baselitz. Through Sept. 17. . . . ¶ “Josef Albers: Glass, Color, and Light,” a show of paintings on glass, glass constructions, oil paintings, and rarely exhibited photographs. Through Sept. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—A survey of Gary Hill’s œuvre, in which room after darkened room offers video works of technical finesse and strange, even ravishing beauty. In “Searchlight,” for example, a motorized cylinder, which beams an image of an ocean horizon onto the opposite wall, slowly moves from side to side; as the projector approaches the limit of its range, the circular image stretches into a ghostly ellipse, with the sound of waves providing a mournful counterpoint. Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ Twenty-five paintings, sculptures, photographs, and installations are on view in “Antipodean Currents: Ten Contemporary Artists from Australia.” Through Aug. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—“Edward Hopper and the American Imagination,” a selection of sixty-five paintings intended to explore his sensibility rather than illustrate his themes or artistic development. Works are hung in groups accompanied by passages from writers that Hopper admired, including Emerson, Frost, and E. B. White. . . . ¶ In the new series “Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art,” guest curators from European institutions will organize shows using works from the Whitney’s collection and from their own museums’ holdings. The first installment is curated by Rudi Fuchs, the director of the Stedelijk Museum, in Amsterdam. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Guess who’s back? Some one hundred saurischian and ornithischian dinosaurs. That means a cleaned and repositioned Tyrannosaurus rex, an apatosaurus with a new skull and neck bones, and many other specimens, eighty-five per cent of which are real fossils (as opposed to casts). (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—“The Pictographs of Adolph Gottlieb,” a series of sixty gridded paintings with Native American, Freudian, Joycean, and other imagery, in free-associative compositions. Through Aug. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—Monkeys acting like humans, monkeys in their natural state, and monkeys as divine figures: these images grace sculptures, prints, and objects from India, Southeast Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan in a show called . . . “Monkey.” Through Sept. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Beach parties, cocktails, airplanes, and modern-art patterns, in an array of colors and textures, are the stars of “Kitsch to Corbusier: Wallpaper from the 1950s.” Through Aug. 27. . . . ¶ “The Structure of Style: Dutch Modernism in the Applied Arts 1880-1930.” Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ A display of jewelry and accessories from the museum’s collection, including Egyptian mummy beads and gold snuffboxes. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Museo del Barrio, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—“Reaffirming Spirituality,” the third exhibition in the series “Artists Talk Back: Visual Conversations with El Museo.” In every installment, participating artists have each chosen a work from the permanent collection to display alongside one of their own. Among the current thirty-four are Cándida Alvarez, Carlos Gutiérrez Solana, and Jaime Davidovich. Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 5; Thursdays, noon to 7.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W.—“On the Avenue, Fifth Avenue,” a trim little exhibition of prints, photographs, architectural drawings, and historical objects devoted to the evolution of our great thoroughfare, which suggests that once upon a time New York really *was* paradise. A photograph of St. Luke’s Hospital, at 54th Street, reveals that in 1865 the Avenue was a country lane. Architect George B. Post’s cross-sectional view of Cornelius Vanderbilt’s mansion makes even a servant’s life in those days look dreamy. (Don’t miss the portrait in the corridor outside, by an unknown painter, of Edward Hyde, Viscount Cornberry, an eighteenth-century governor of New York, posed coquettishly in full drag, with an ivory fan. Really.) Through Sept. 17. . . . ¶ In “Treasury of the Past,” an object or a set of objects representing each year from 1750 to 1950 is on view. Through Sept. 17. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—“The View from Within: Japanese American Art from the Internment Camps, 1942-45.” Paintings by amateur and professional artists, who often had only sheets, pillowcases, or potato sacks to use as canvases. Through July 16. . . . ¶ A conceptual installation titled “Project Article 9,” by Yukinori Yanagi, a young artist who has a concurrent show at Blum (99 Wooster St.). Through July 16. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Robert Andrew Parker—A retrospective of watercolors and drawings, accompanied by stories and accounts of dreams. Through July 14. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Short List—mark metcalf, Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. Through July 21. . . . **david row,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through July 28.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Alexander Calder (1898-1976)—Brass and silver jewelry from the thirties through the fifties, along with serpentine line drawings in ink. Through July 28. (A/D, 560 Broadway.)

Lesley Dill—A collaboration between the artist and Dieu Donné Papermill has produced an eight-foot-tall paper dress that features a rendering in wire of an eight-line Emily Dickinson poem. Through July 15. (Dieu Donné, 433 Broome St. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.)

Philip Guston (1913-80)—"Philip Guston's Poem-Pictures," an exhibition of drawings with verse. Through July 28. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays, and Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Peter Halley / Ettore Sottsass—Halley, the Neo-Geo abstractionist, had the smart idea of pairing his latest paintings, which combine a modernist reductionism and a brazenly vulgar pop sensibility, with furniture and ceramics by the Italian innovator Sottsass, creator of the controversial eighties style known as Memphis. Several pieces in this show are pure Memphis in their kitschy grandiosity. Design enthusiasts, however, may be more intrigued by some of Sottsass's earlier work, which is represented here by ceramics dating back to 1959. Through July 28. (Gorney, 100 Greene St. Closed Mondays.)

"The Moderns"—Tony Payne definitely wasn't thinking of Picasso and Braque when he curated this large and rather loosely conceived group show. Sex—especially in its more unconventional and/or lurid forms—is the running theme. The legend on a small 1985 Andy Warhol painting of a man with a star on his forehead queries "Are You Different?"; given the preponderance of male nudity, S. & M. shenanigans, and cross-dressing, the answer is "In this context, no." Recreational drug use provides an occasional thematic chaser. Through July 28. (Feature, 76 Greene St. Closed Mondays.)

"Bloom"—When in doubt, paint a flower. Horticultural themes are popular with artists, from the sublime (Manet, Fantin-Latour, Redon) down to the nameless venders of kitsch. This show includes its share of name artists (Ross Bleckner, Peter Campus, Adam Fuss), who all contribute predictably pretty works. The highlight is by the performance artist Karen Finley: an innocuous, impressionistically rendered bouquet of irises bearing the text "I drink myself to death because I love you but I love my liquor more." Through July 29. (Cristinerose, 395 West Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

Short List—**BRYAN HUNT,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. Through July 14. . . . **BARRY LE VA,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. Closed Mondays; through July 28. . . . **JULIAN SCHNABEL,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Through July 14. . . . **YUKINORI YANAGI,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. Through July 29.

PHOTOGRAPHY

International Center of Photography Midtown—"An American Century of Photography: From Dry-Plate to Digital—The Hallmark Photographic Collection." Two hundred works by both well-known photographers (including Stieglitz, Weston, Strand, and Steiner) and less familiar ones. Through Sept. 10. . . . ¶ "Eyes on an Era," pictures from the thirties through the sixties by photojournalist Irving Haberman. Through Sept. 10. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

"Faces"—Not portraits, but candid glimpses of people walking, working, relaxing, etc., by Levitt, Evans, Friedlander, Weegee, Klein, Winogrand, and others. Through July 27. (Seagram Building, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St., fourth floor. Open Mondays through Thursdays, 9 to 5; Fridays, 9 to 1.)

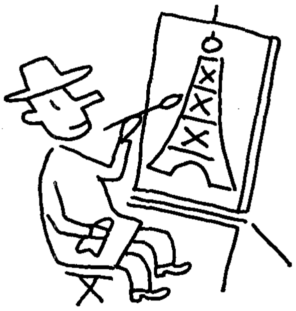
Short List—**HERBERT MATTER,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. Closed Mondays; through Sept. 2. . . . **ARNO RAFAEL MINKKINEN,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Closed Mondays; through July 14. . . . **JO ANN VERBURG,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through Aug. 18. . . . **BRETT WESTON,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. Closed Mondays, open Saturdays; through July 29.

(See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the the Museum of Modern Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Scaling the Scales

Richard Strauss's "An Alpine Symphony," a one-movement travelogue that takes the listener up a mountain and down again, is a rarity on the concert stage for reasons both quantitative and qualitative. Its mammoth orchestration calls for a hundred and twenty-four players, including such extravagances as an offstage brass band, a phalanx of fifteen French horns, a baritone oboe, a wind machine, and a thunder machine—all of which make it an expensive trek. The quality issue is less objective: some love the piece; others hate it. As a sonic exercise it can be thrilling, and Strauss felt that in this, his last tone poem, he had finally achieved a structural resolution to the antitheses of "absolute" music and "program" music. Yet the theorist and critic Theodor Adorno attacked "An Alpine Symphony" for *failing* to synthesize those aspects, deploring "the crass externality of the relationship between program and form," and Hindemith pronounced that it would be "better to hang oneself than ever to write music like that."



PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

The New York Philharmonic apparently thinks more of the piece than Adorno and Hindemith did: "An Alpine Symphony" has made its way to the orchestra's music stands during six seasons since music director Josef Stransky first programmed it, in 1916. On July 18-19, at Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur will once again navigate its terrain, leaving listeners to decide how high above sea level this musical Alp rises.

OPERA

New York Grand Opera—A staged production of Verdi's "Ernani," the composer's fifth opera and the first of ten (among them "Rigoletto," "La Traviata," and "La Forza del Destino") on which he collaborated with librettist Francesco Maria Piave. The cast includes soprano Janine Bogardus, tenor Antonio Carangelo, baritone Theodore Lambrinos, and bass-baritone Kevin Short. Vincent La Selva conducts. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 12 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

"I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky"—A theatre piece with music by John Adams, directed by Peter Sellars. (John Jay Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. July 12-14 at 8; July 15 at 3 and 8; and July 16 at 3. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

"Farewell My Concubine"—A Peking opera well known to Western audiences through its depiction in Chen Kaige's 1993 film of the same name. This production features Wei Hai-ming and Li Chang-chun. Also on the program is "Ching-shih Mountain," a short operetta rich in acrobatics. (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850. July 13-15 at 7:30 and July 16 at 2. Through July 23.)

Opera Manhattan—Gabriel Guimarães leads stagings of single acts from three French operas: Ernest Reyer's "Sigurd" (1884), Ernest Chausson's "Le Roi Arthus" (1895), and Albéric Magnard's "Guercoeur" (1901). (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. July 13 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1660.)

CONCERTS

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur conducting. July 13-15 at 8: A concert version of the 1885 operetta "Der Zigeunerbaron," by Johann Strauss, Jr., with a cast that includes soprano Julia Migenes and baritone Jan Opalach. Beverly Sills delivers a narration written by Andrew Porter. . . . ¶ July 18-19 at 8: Mozart's Symphony No. 6 (K. 43) and A-Major Piano Concerto (K. 488, with Helen Huang), as well as Richard Strauss's "An Alpine Symphony." (875-5030.)

Music for Lunch—Free midday concerts. At Stuyvesant Park: The New York Percussion Quartet. (Second Ave. at E. 15th St. July 12 at 12:30.) . . . ¶ At Federal Hall: Pianist Yoshie Kubota. (26 Wall St. July 12 at 12:30.) . . . ¶ At Bryant Park: On July 12 and July 14, clarinettist Todd Palmer and colleagues play chamber music; on July 17, the New York Percussion Quartet performs. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. Afternoons at 12:30.) . . . ¶ At Battery Park's Great Lawn: The Ahn Trio, playing piano trios by Haydn and Dvořák. (July 13 at 12:30.) . . . ¶ At Greeley Square: American Opera Projects presents excerpts from American lyric stage works. (Broadway at 32nd St. July 13 at 12:15 and 1:15.) . . . ¶ At Green Auditorium: Pianist Francis Heilbut. (40 W. 68th St. July 13 at 1.)

Catherine Mackintosh and Maggie Cole—The violinist and the harpsichordist offer period-instrument interpretations of works by Bach, Domenico Scarlatti, and others. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. July 12 at 5:45.)

Bargemusic—Pianist Cynthia Raim performs Haydn's C-Major Sonata (No. 50), violinist Carmit Zori and cellist Timothy Eddy play Ravel's Duo, and all join for Dvořák's F-Minor Piano Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. July 13 at 7:30 and July 16 at 4.)

MOMA Summergarden—Musicians from the Juilliard School continue their exploration of American compositions written between 1945 and 1970. The current installment features chamber works by Donald Martino, Seymour Shifrin, Leon Kirchner, Roger Reynolds, and Lukas Foss. (Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, 14 W. 54th St. July 14-15 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

City Island Baroque Ensemble—Performing Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons," with violinist Anton Miller. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. July 16 at noon.)

"Music from Aston Magna"—Works from Bach's final decade—his "Musical Offering," E-Major Flute Sonata, and fourteen canons on the bass of the "Goldberg" Variations—will be performed by musicians affiliated with the Massachusetts early-music academy: flutist Christopher Krueger, violinists and violists Daniel Stepner and Linda Quan, viola da gambist Laura Jeppeson, and fortepianist John Gibbons. A fortepiano in Bach? Well, yes: when the composer visited Frederick the Great in Potsdam, in 1747, the musical monarch played him a theme of his own invention on one of the several fortepianos that Gottfried Silbermann had built for the court. After expressing some initial concern about the theme's contrapuntal viability, Bach ended up exploring it brilliantly in the sixteen movements of his "Musical Offering" to the king. So far as the newfangled pianos were concerned, Bach spoke well of them and even helped promote Silbermann's sales, though he stopped short of purchasing one himself. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. July 16 at 5.)

Salon Soirée—Clarinettist Jo-Ann Sternberg, cellist Iris Regev, and pianist Ilan Rechtman offer trios by Glinka and Brahms. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. July 16 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

New York Pops—Pianist Victor Borge comes on board to stir the audience's risibilities. Skitch Henderson conducts. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. July 17 at 8. No tickets necessary; for information about priority seating, call 765-7677.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tanglewood—July 12 at 8:30: Keith Lockhart conducts the Boston Pops Orchestra. . . . ¶ July 13 at 8:30: Three piano trios by Beethoven (in C Minor, Op. 1, No. 3, as well as the "Ghost" and the "Archduke"), with the Beaux Arts Trio. . . . ¶ July 14 at 8:30: John Nelson conducts the Boston Symphony in Mendelssohn's "Fingal's Cave Overture" and Symphony No. 3 (the "Scottish"), as well as Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto (with Sarah Chang). . . . ¶ July 15 at 8:30: The Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra plays music by Beethoven, Mahler (several of his "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" songs, with soprano Barbara Bonney), and Bernstein (including his Symphonic Dances from "West Side Story"). Seiji Ozawa conducts. . . . ¶ July 16 at 2:30: Thomas Dausgaard leads the Boston Symphony in Gunther Schuller's "Dramatic Overture," Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 (with André Watts), and Schumann's Symphony No. 4. (Lenox, Mass. 1-413 637-1600.)

Opera Festival of New Jersey—Final performances of the season. July 13 and July 15 at 8: "The Turn of the Screw." . . . ¶ July 14 at 8: "Rigoletto." . . . ¶ July 16 at 3: "The Elixir of Love," in English. (The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, N.J. 1-609 936-1500.)

Rushmore Festival—Lukas Foss curates three concerts that consider the music of Hindemith from different perspectives. July 14 at 8:30: The Germanic tradition of Bach and Brahms, leading to Hindemith's "The Four Temperaments." . . . ¶ July 15 at 6: Chamber works by Hindemith and his contemporaries Poulenc and Bartók. . . . ¶ July 16 at 5: Hindemith and American composers who were influenced by him. (Woodbury, N.Y. For information about tickets and a shuttle bus from Lincoln Center, call 212-207-8334.)

Caramoor—July 14 at 8:30: The St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble performs Mozart's D-Major Divertimento (K. 131); the Duo Assad performs arrangements for two guitars and joins the ensemble for Radamés Gnattali's Concerto for Two Guitars, Oboe, and Strings. . . . ¶ July 15 at 8:30: Caramoor celebrates its fifty years of music-making by presenting an array of artists closely associated with the festival. Included on the roster are soprano Sylvia McNair; violinist Elmar Oliveira; pianists Alicia de Larrocha, Garrick Ohlsson, Misha Dichter, and André Previn; members of the Tokyo String Quartet; and the Orchestra of St. Luke's (led by Mr. Previn and Peter Oundjian). . . . ¶ July 16 at 5:30: Solo and chamber music by Mozart and Mendelssohn, with violinist Ayako Yoshida, cellist Wendy Warner, and pianists de Larrocha and Previn. (Katonah, N.Y. 1-914 232-1252.)

Glimmerglass Opera—July 15 at 8: "Paul Bunyan," Britten's first opera, written between 1939 and 1941. The composer was living in New York at the time (hoping to sit out the war), at an experimental, bisexual commune in a Brooklyn Heights brownstone, where his fellow tenants included W. H. Auden (who wrote the opera's libretto), Paul and Jane Bowles, and Carson McCullers, as well as Britten's lover, the tenor Peter Pears (who described the place as "sordid beyond belief"). Charming and rather silly, "Paul Bunyan" remains an amusing trifle with little connection to the composer's later operatic style. . . . ¶ July 16 at 2: "Don Giovanni." . . . ¶ July 17 at 2: "The Yeomen of the Guard." (Cooperstown, N.Y. 1-607 547-2255.)

Maverick Concerts—Violinist Stephanie Chase plays Bach's D-Minor Partita; pianist Steven Lubin offers Schumann's "Carnaval"; and the two join for Brahms's D-Minor Violin Sonata. (Woodstock, N.Y. 1-914 679-8217. July 16 at 3.)

Music Mountain—The Miami String Quartet performs Mendelssohn's Quartet No. 1, Beethoven's Quartet No. 2, and (with Jon Klibonoff) Franck's Piano Quintet. (Falls Village, Conn. For information about tickets, call 1-203 824-7126. July 16 at 3.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Pâté Down—On Sunday, two days after the French toast their revolution, Restaurant Florent will be commemorating Bastille Day with its own swirl of cancan dancers, opera singers, jongleurs, drag queens, and table service for four hundred. This year, couture comes to the annual fracas with a "Grande Présentation des Marie-Antoinettes" in which Betsey Johnson, John Bartlett, Nicole Miller, Ruben and Isabel Toledo, and other designers will present their takes on the cake-shilling figurehead. Since the day's live entertainment always fills the area around the restaurant, Gansevoort Street between Greenwich and Washington Streets will close down for the block party from noon to 10. For reservations to dine in the eye of the storm, call 989-5779.

The Lead and How to Swing It—Midsummer Night Swing continues on the plaza at Lincoln Center. The partnering starts at 8:15 on Wednesdays through Saturdays, through July 22. To find your footing, there's a dance lesson at 6:30 every evening except Saturday. July 12: Vicki Sue Robinson gets onstage with the Original Trammps for a night of classic disco, complete with a hustle contest. . . . ¶ July 13: The Viennese waltz, as played by the Angelo DiPippo Orchestra and the Orion Music's Viennese Orchestra. Easy as *one*, two, three. . . . ¶ July 14: Two combos—Patato Valdes and Afrojazzia, and Giovanni Hidalgo and his orchestra—play Latin dance music. . . . ¶ July 15: The Stan Rubin Orchestra brings out the swinging crowd. (Tickets available on the evening of the event.)

Get In Line—Herman's, the sports haberdashery, sponsors a Rollerblade race around the Central Park loop, with an après-skate party at Tavern on the Green, on July 13. The official timer starts clocking the skaters at 6:30. For information about registration, call the New York Road Skaters Association, at 534-7858. . . . ¶ July 14 at 6:15: Time's Up invites cyclists and skaters to circle once around the loop, two by two, on a single lane of the Central Park road, in the Calming Ride, part of the environmental organization's effort to make the Park automobile-free. For more information, call 802-8222.

Hiroshima to New York—In anticipation of the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, the mayor of that city, Takashi Hiraoka, joins Mayor Giuliani in a ceremony at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Soprano Camellia Johnson will perform a selection from Mahler's "Songs of a Wayfarer," and mezzo-soprano Florence Quivar will sing Menotti's "Lullaby." The Rushmore Orchestra, under the direction of Lukas Foss, will play Barber's Adagio for Strings and Bach's "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 3. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. July 13 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

Readings—July 12 at 7: Bret Easton Ellis gives his first public reading from "American Psycho." (Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 13 at 8: Melvin Jules Bukiet reads from his collection of stories "While the Messiah Tarries." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 13 at 8:30: Poet June Jordan reads from her libretto for "I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky," and dancer and choreographer Bill T. Jones reads from his memoir, "Last Night on Earth." (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 14 at 8: Shahram Shiva recites the poems of Rumi in the original Persian and in his own English translations. Bruce Detrick accompanies him on the piano. (New York Open Center, 83 Spring St. 219-2527.)

Talk—July 17 at 6: Titus Oyewole Okumodi Thompson sets out wine and cheese and a sampling of New England food, including buttermilk soup, onion pie, and codfish cake, for his discussion of the region's culinary arcana. (Old Merchant's House Museum, 4 E. 29th St. For reservations, call 777-1089.)

Walks—July 16 at 11: John Kriskiewicz passes around photos of the old Brooklyn theme parks (Steeplechase, Dreamland, Luna Park), then takes to the Boardwalk for a retrospective tour of Coney Island from Nathan's to Brighton Beach. For more information, call 1-718 624-0890. . . . ¶ July 16 at 1: At the New-York Historical Society, Grady Turner unrolls rare maps of Manhattan before Central Park was built, then leads a Park tour to Seneca Village, the site of onetime Irish and African-American communities. For more information, call 873-3400.

DEMITRIOS PSILLOS

Julia Migenes, in "Der Zigeunerbaron," with the New York Philharmonic.

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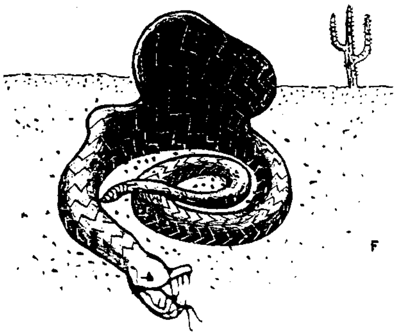


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Grosse Fatigue—A comedy written and directed by and starring Michel Blanc. In French. Opening July 12. (68th St. Playhouse and Quad Cinema.)

The Indian in the Cupboard—Frank Oz directs the film version of Lynne Reid Banks's 1981 novel, about a nine-year-old (Hal Scardino) whose toy Indian comes to life. With the Native American rap artist Litefoot, and Rishi Bhat, Lindsay Crouse, Richard Jenkins, and David Keith. Screenplay by Melissa Mathison. Opening July 14. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Embassy.)

Living in Oblivion—Independent writer-director Tom DiCillo's comedy about one headachy day in the making of an independent film. Starring Steve Buscemi (as the movie's director), Dermot Mulroney, Catherine Keener, and James LeGros. Opening July 14. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Nine Months—Hugh Grant and Julianne Moore are a young couple who discover that they are going to be parents, in a comedy written and directed by Chris Columbus. With Tom Arnold, Joan Cusack, Jeff Goldblum, and Robin Williams. Opening July 12. (Gotham Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Criterion Center.)

Under Siege 2: Dark Territory—Steven Seagal returns, this time as a passenger on a cross-country train seized by terrorists who plan to blow up the Pentagon. Eric Bogosian is the lead bomber. Geoff Murphy directs, from a screenplay by Richard Hatem and Matt Reeves. Opening July 14. (Village East Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Criterion Center.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre addresses and phone numbers are listed on page 20.)

Apollo 13—Ron Howard's movie is the true story of the manned lunar mission in which almost everything went wrong—so wrong that there was a real possibility that the spacecraft wouldn't make it back to Earth. The movie, like the 1970 mission itself, gets home safely only by the skin of its teeth. Dean Cundey's cinematography is drab, James Horner's score is unbearable, and Howard retards the momentum with frequent cutaways to the astronauts' families, who are, unsurprisingly, mighty worried. But the acting—especially by Tom Hanks, Kevin Bacon, and Bill Paxton (as the imperilled astronauts), and Ed Harris (as a fiercely determined NASA flight controller in Houston)—is sharp and persuasive. And the screenplay, by William Broyles, Jr., and Al Reinert, makes the scientific details both comprehensible and exciting. The film, despite its raggedness, is stirring. In the end, this failed mission seems like the most impressive achievement of the entire space program: a triumph not of planning but of inspired improvisation. Also with Gary Sinise and Kathleen Quinlan.—T.R. (7/10/95) (34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Regency.)

Batman Forever—Is that a threat? In the third installment of the lucrative series, Val Kilmer replaces Michael Keaton as the title superhero, and Joel Schumacher takes over from Tim Burton as the director. Kilmer, in a bulging, rubbery Batsuit, looks and sounds like an action toy. Schumacher's direction is coarse and slovenly: the picture has the self-conscious jokiness of the "Batman" TV series and the smudged, runny imagery of a cheaply printed comic book. Viewers who enjoyed the first two films should follow the example of Keaton and Burton and sit this one out. There's some dignity in surrendering to a bat; there's none in surrendering to a turkey. Also with Jim Carrey (as the Riddler), Tommy Lee Jones (as Two-Face), Chris O'Donnell (as Robin), Nicole Kidman, and Michael Gough.—T.R. (7/10/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

Braveheart—Mel Gibson is the star, director, and co-producer of this hefty new epic, which lasts nearly three hours and covers more than thirty years of medieval Scottish history. He plays William Wallace, the hero with the thrash-metal hair who decides to make life hell for the Englishmen who are crawling all over his country. The political argument that ensues is pretty dull, but the battle scenes are the loudest and most convincing in years: Gibson has learned from Kurosawa in lending a clarifying thrust to what is, essentially, chaos.—A.L. (6/5/95) (Village Theatre VII, New York Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Lincoln Square, and National Twin. . . . ¶ East 85th Street; through July 13.)

The Bridges of Madison County—Screenwriter Richard LaGravenese and director Clint Eastwood have taken Robert James Waller's best-selling novel and turned out something sombre and restrained—almost, in fact, good (though it's too long). Eastwood also stars, as Kincaid, the strolling photographer who shows up at an Iowa farmhouse and falls for the lonely Francesca (Meryl Streep). The two leads' sly comic rhythm is miles removed from the book's flailing solemnity, though Eastwood has bravely given himself the few ridiculous lines that survived.—A.L. (6/19/95) (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Tower East, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Carmen Miranda: Bananas Is My Business—A documentary about the life of the Brazilian-born dancer and movie star. Directed by Helena Solberg. In English and Portuguese. (Film Forum; through July 18.)

Congo—The director, Frank Marshall, who has produced films for Steven Spielberg, gets his own Michael Crichton book to play with—and the results are disastrous. To be fair, "Congo" wasn't much of a book either—a talking gorilla, super satellites, diamond mines, killer apes, earthquakes; it was Jules Verne meets "Planet of the Apes." The film strands the actors in a sea of silly dialogue (although Tim Curry, cast as a Romanian philanthropist, seems to be having a little fun with the whole mess), and Marshall, who has directed some nifty films ("Arachnophobia," "Alive"), doesn't know where the comedy ends and the adventure begins. The film received some of the worst reviews of the summer, but audiences lined up anyway. It's a testament to Crichton's dubious popularity—the movie isn't funny or exciting.—B.D. (19th Street East 6, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Crimson Tide—A doomsday thriller that reunites the infamous "Top Gun" team: producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer and director Tony Scott. It's a movie for people who really miss the Cold War. Russkies are on the rampage again, and the fate of the world hangs by its customary thread. Aboard the nuclear sub U.S.S. Alabama, the captain (Gene Hackman) and the executive officer (Denzel Washington) bicker and take turns relieving each other of command. The action is loud and flashy, but there isn't really much suspense. The movie operates in such well-charted waters that it feels less like a dangerous naval mission than like a luxury cruise: the accommodations are cozy and the activities carefully planned.—T.R. (5/15/95) (Village East Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, Lincoln Square, and Embassy.)

The Crude Oasis—A low-budget début by writer-director Alex Graves, about a lonely housewife in Kansas (Jennifer Taylor) who pursues the local gas-station attendant (Aaron Shields), the subject of her nightmares. With Robert Peterson as her adulterous husband. (Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

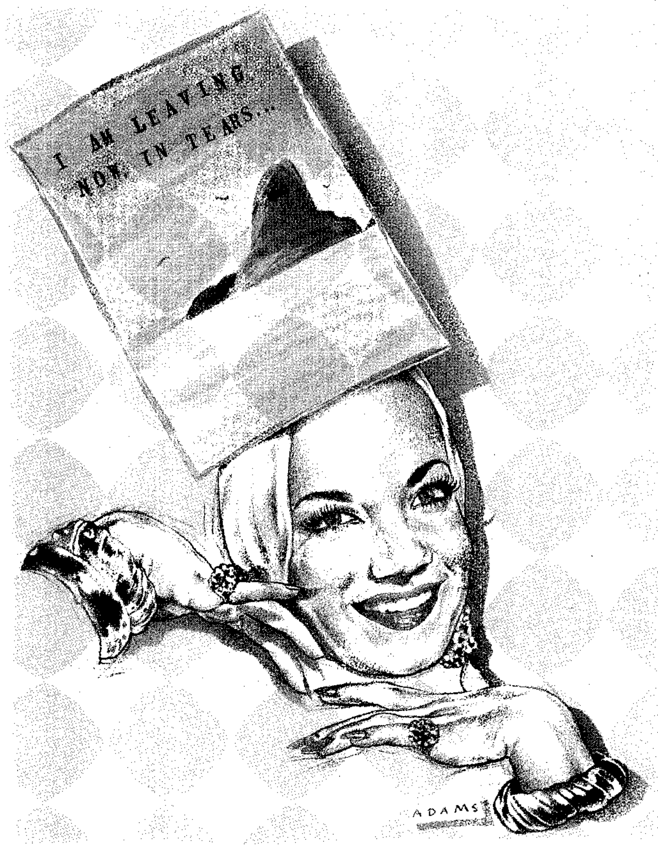
Crumb—Terry Zwigoff's brilliant, scary documentary about the underground-comics artist R. Crumb. While the film is reviewing Crumb's career, from its psychedelic-era heyday to the present, and following him as he goes about his everyday activities, it's also telling a harrowing story about his damaged family. The movie is often funny, but what makes it extraordinary is that it explores, without presuming to explain, the sources of a unique and savage comic sensibility. And it shows us that Crumb's gift—the detachment that allows him to create such hilariously contemptuous images of the world around him (and inside him)—is also a kind of curse, or, at least, a nasty habit.—T.R. (5/1/95) (Film Forum 3.)

Die Hard with a Vengeance—The third adventure with New York cop John McClane (Bruce Willis), the sweaty, blue-collar American counterpart of James Bond; once again, McClane gets his undershirt dirty foiling the schemes of a world-class megalomaniac (here, Jeremy Irons). John McTiernan—who directed the original "Die Hard" (1988) but skipped the first sequel—has returned, and his professionalism gives the series a lift. But if this picture is any indication, the ultimate fate of all action-movie series may be to become perfectly indistinguishable from one another. McTiernan supplies one climax after another, but when the whole intense, meaningless experience is over, you may have trouble putting a name or a face to the movie that just had its way with you. With Samuel L. Jackson.—T.R. (5/29/95) (Murray Hill Cinemas, Baronet, Coronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain—Hugh Grant again unleashes his bashful-boy smile and cloaks himself in an aura of modest, befuddled sincerity. But the illusion of ease has vanished, and his charm has gone with it. For a while, this slight anecdote about a Welsh village during the First World War seems an amiable anachronism—a throwback to the eccentric-community formula of Ealing comedy. But the writer and director, Christopher Monger, tries to pile more meaning onto his story than its fragile structure can support, and he buries the small good thing he started out with.—T.R. (5/15/95) (Village East Cinemas and Cinema 3.)

First Knight—The latest version of the legend of Camelot, directed by Jerry Zucker. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th St. East, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love—Two high school seniors, Randy (Laurel Hollomon), a tomboy outcast, and Evie (Nicole Parker), a popular girl who has yet to come out, fall in love. The leads are charming, in a modest, indie-movie sort of way. But except for some farce at the end, as family and various oddball acquaintances—a microcosm of a world that needs to be sensitized—wait for Randy and Evie to come out of a motel room and admit that they're a couple, this is your basic puppy-love story rewritten for girls: admirably unsensational, earnest, and engaging, in the tradition of an after-school special. Written and directed by Maria Maggenti.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)


I AM LEAVING NOW IN TEARS...
ADAMS

At the Film Forum, "Carmen Miranda: Bananas Is My Business."

LISA ADAMS

Judge Dredd—Sylvester Stallone is a twenty-second-century policeman, in Danny Cannon's film version of the British comic strip. (Village Theatre VII, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1.)

Little Odessa—Joshua the hit man (Tim Roth) returns to the Russian section of Brooklyn on a job, and for the first time in years he links up with his family: his mopey younger brother (Edward Furlong), his dying mother (Vanessa Redgrave), and his disapproving, belt-wielding father (Maximilian Schell). The writer and director, James Gray, draws formidable work from his cast. This potent, cheerless movie gets to you, and gets you down. It's one for a rainy day.—A.L. (East-side Playhouse and Quad Cinema.)

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie—The team of six teen-agers turned superheroes has vaulted from television to the big screen, with the cast intact. Directed by Bryan Spicer. Written by Arne Olsen. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Pocahontas—Disney's animated take on the Algonquin princess and Captain John Smith, with voices by Irene Bedard, Judy Kuhn, Mel Gibson, Russell Means, and Linda Hunt. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, Lincoln Square, and Olympia.)

Safe—Todd Haynes wrote and directed this drama about an affluent San Fernando Valley housewife (Julianne Moore) who becomes a victim of environmental illness. (Angelika Film Center.)

Smoke—Five years ago, the director Wayne Wang asked the novelist Paul Auster to work up one of his stories as a screenplay. The result—a highly cerebral intertwining of the lives of white and black characters in Brooklyn in 1990, centering on a cigar-store owner (Harvey Keitel) and a lonely writer (William Hurt)—is obviously a labor of love. But Wang's sentimentality and Auster's self-consciousness don't go together: the direction is literal, and the lines sound like short-story dialogue read aloud. Only Forest Whitaker, playing a guilty father, comes off well. A gorgeous sequence that runs behind the final credits—with no dialogue, just a song by Tom Waits—suggests what the film *might* have been. With Harold Perrineau, Jr., Stockard Channing, and Ashley Judd.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center, Sutton, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

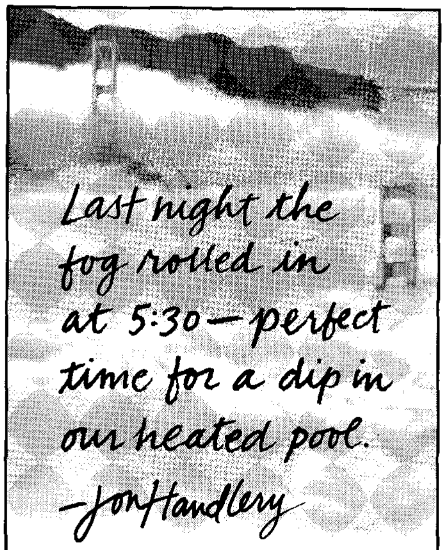
Species—Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Alfred Molina, and Forest Whitaker star in a science-fiction thriller about what happens when scientists inject a human embryo with alien DNA. Also with Marg Helgenberger and Natasha Henstridge. Directed by Roger Donaldson. Written by Dennis Feldman. (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

Wigstock: The Movie—The "Lady" Bunny has been organizing New York's drag festival for a decade now, and what began as a small wigs-and-heels gathering in Tompkins Square Park has grown into a major get-your-hot-dogs-here event. Barry Shils's record of the 1993-94 celebrations captures some of its style and playfulness—Joey Arias singing a Billie Holiday tune, Jackie Beat outfitted as the heir to Divine's designs, Lypsinka strutting across the stage like an escapee from a fifties Amana Radar Range demonstration. What's onscreen, though, could pretty much have been captured on anyone's camcorder, and the editing and directorial cues look as if they were taken from public-access television. The performers have character; the movie doesn't.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center.)

Wild Reeds—In 1962, near the end of the Algerian war, a French-Algerian teen-ager (Frédéric Gorny) arrives at a boys' boarding school in the south of France, where he takes up with two students (Gaël Morel and Stéphane Rideau) and the daughter of their teacher (Elodie Bouchez). Directed by André Téchiné, who co-wrote with Gilles Taurand and Olivier Massart. In French. (Quad Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

BANDIT QUEEN: Village East Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **BURNT BY THE SUN** (reviewed in our issue of 5/8/95): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **CASPER:** Manhattan Twin and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . **CIRCLE OF FRIENDS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DEVI:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **DOLORES CLAIBORNE** (4/3/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DON JUAN DE MARCO** (4/10/95):



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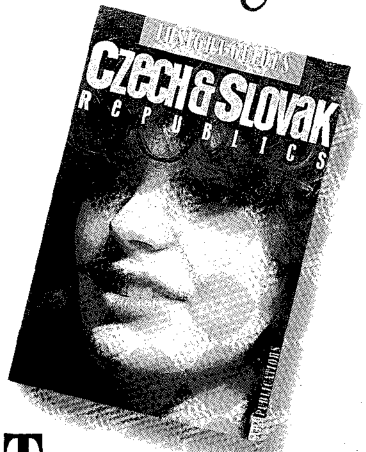

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Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **EXOTICA:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **FORGET PARIS** (5/22/95): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **THE GLASS SHIELD** (6/12/95): Movieland 8th Street Triplex. . . . **HEAVEN'S A DRAG:** Quad Cinema. . . . **A LITTLE PRINCESS** (5/29/95): Manhattan Twin. . . . **LOSING ISAIAH:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LOVE AND HUMAN REMAINS:** Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE** (1/16/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MURIEL'S WEDDING:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE MYSTERY OF RAMPO:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **PARTY GIRL:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **PICTURE BRIDE:** Plaza. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **PULP FICTION** (10/10/94): Movieland 8th Street Triplex. . . . **SISTER MY SISTER:** Cinema Village. . . . **TWO DAUGHTERS:** Angelika 57. . . . **WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING** (5/22/95): Embassy. . . . **WINGS OF COURAGE** (4/24/95): Lincoln Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

•

EAST SIDE

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000).
LITTLE THEATRE, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171).
MOVIELAND 8TH STREET TRIPLEX, 36 E. 8th (477-6600).
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th (982-0400).
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th (924-3363).
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, 2nd Ave. at 12th (529-6799).
19TH STREET EAST 6, B'way at 19th (260-8000).
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th (689-6548).
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th (532-5544).
34TH ST. EAST, 241 E. 34th (683-0255).
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, 3rd Ave. at 55th (755-3020).
SUTTON I AND 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th (759-1411).
GOTHAM CINEMA, 3rd Ave. at 58th (759-2262).
PLAZA, 42 E. 58th (355-3320).
MANHATTAN TWIN, 3rd Ave. at 59th (935-6420).
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th (759-4630).
BARONET AND CORONET, 3rd Ave. at 59th (355-1663).
CINEMA I, CINEMA II, AND CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, 3rd Ave. at 60th (753-6022).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd (513-5408).
GEMINI I AND 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th (832-1670).
BEEKMAN, 2nd Ave. at 66th (737-2622).
NEW YORK TWIN, 2nd Ave. at 67th (744-7339).
68TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, 3rd Ave. at 68th (734-0302).
TOWER EAST, 3rd Ave. at 71st (879-1313).
EAST 85TH STREET, 1st Ave. at 85th (249-5100).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th (534-1880).
ORPHEUM VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th (876-2400).
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, 3rd Ave. at 86th (249-1144).

WEST SIDE

FILM FORUM, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110).
WAVERLY I AND 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd (929-8037).
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th (929-3350).
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th (255-8800).
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd (513-5402).
23RD ST. WEST TRIPLEX, 333 W. 23rd (989-0060).
GUILD, 33 W. 50th (757-2406).
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St., between 8th and 9th Aves. (504-0960).
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th (765-7600).
CARNEGIE HALL CINEMAS, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th (265-2520).
ANGELIKA 57, 225 W. 57th (586-1900).
PARIS, 4 W. 58th (980-5656).
CINEMA 3, 2 W. 59th (752-5959).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd (265-7466).
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, B'way at 63rd (757-2280).
REGENCY, B'way at 67th (724-3700).
LINCOLN SQUARE, B'way at 68th (336-5000).
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, B'way at 84th (877-3600).
METRO CINEMA I AND 2, B'way at 99th (222-1200).
OLYMPIA I AND II, B'way at 107th (865-8128).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

CRITERION CENTER, B'way at 44th (354-0900).
EMBASSY I, B'way at 46th (302-0494).
EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, 7th Ave. at 47th (730-7262).
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at B'way (869-8340).
NATIONAL TWIN, B'way at 44th (869-0950).

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

BELLE DE JOUR (1967)—Luis Buñuel was in his late sixties when he made this icy, bracingly unwholesome film about the secret life of an elegant Parisian bourgeoise. Sévérine (Catherine Deneuve), who is frigid with her handsome and considerate husband (Jean Sorel), spends her afternoons as a prostitute in a discreet, upscale brothel, where her cool passivity makes her a big draw: she's a screen onto which men can project their erotic fantasies. And since Sévérine's fantasies—lovingly dramatized by Buñuel—tend to involve her own subjugation, she gets something out of these strange encounters, too. The movie, adapted by Buñuel and Jean-Claude Carrière from a popular novel by Joseph Kessel, is a pristine example of the great filmmaker's serenely outrageous late style. In this picture, desire has a de-luxe blandness that's both mysterious and deeply, unnervingly funny. Also with Michel Piccoli, Geneviève Page, and Pierre Clementi. Cinematography by Sacha Vierny. Deneuve's clothes are by Yves Saint Laurent. In French.—T.R. (Paris.)

THE BIG CITY (1963)—The city is Calcutta, and Satyajit Ray's heroine, a young married woman, takes a job in order to supplement her husband's income. The movie deals with the wife's discovery of life outside the home, and her changed relations with each member of the family. Madhabi Mukherjee is lovely as the gentle but strong wife, and there are telling portraits of her cruddy, hustling boss, and of an Anglo-Indian girl (Vicky Redwood) who is the victim of his discrimination. The film stays with one, yet it is very quiet and rather thin; it lacks the depths and richness and creative imagery of the best of Satyajit Ray. In Bengali and English.—P.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas; starting July 14.)

THE GREEKS HAD A WORD FOR THEM (1932)—An enormously likable sophisticated comedy about three gold-diggers, played by Madge Evans, Joan Blondell, and the great sophisticate herself—Ina Claire. This is one of the few movies in which she was able to show some of the tricky high style that made her the most fashionable stage comedienne of her time. The three actresses play contrasting types: Madge Evans is the elegant and tasteful one; Joan Blondell is, of course, good-humored and wisecracking; and Ina Claire is naughty and determined—she sets out to tantalize a man by going out in a fur coat with nothing worn under it. With Lowell Sherman, who also directed.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; July 16.)

MACBETH (1948)—Orson Welles shot this reckless production in twenty-three days at Republic Studios (best known for its cowboy quickies), and the movie casts a hallucinatory spell even when the action goes flat and the players declaim in Scottish burrs. Opening with a swirl of phantasmagoric effects, the picture seems to emerge from the cauldron of the three prophetic witches. The producer-director-adapter-star gallops onscreen in Oriental headgear, cape, and armor, and then, after this garish entrance, proceeds to give one of his best classical performances. His characterization of the murderous chieftain has ruminative weight—he stresses the ambiguous aside "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me / Without my stir." Although Welles emphasizes the contest between paganism and Western religion (especially with his barbaric, Druidical visual design), the movie also pays attention to traditional Shakespearean concerns like hubris and free will. With Jeanette Nolan, Dan O'Herlihy, and Roddy McDowall.—M.S. (American Museum of the Moving Image; July 15.)

OLD ACQUAINTANCE (1943)—Trashy fun, on an unusually literate level. Bette Davis is an admirably tough-minded, no-nonsense serious writer, and Miriam Hopkins is her flouncy, butterfly-brained friend, who, out of envy, becomes the author of slovenly big best-sellers. Adapted from John van Druten's play, it spans eighteen years of their love-hate friendship, including a glorious scene in which Davis shakes the catty, hysterical Hopkins. Directed by Vincent Sherman.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; July 15 and 18.)

THE RED INN (1951)—Set in 1833 in the Ardèche Mountains, the story is about a group of travellers in a public carriage who take refuge in a remote inn. Fernandel plays a licentious monk who hears confession from the innkeeper's wife (Françoise Rosay); she nonchalantly reveals that all guests who come to the inn are robbed and murdered, and he sets about the task of getting the guests to leave, without violating the confessional. This Claude Autant-Lara film is generally considered to be a highly sophisticated satire, but it isn't really as funny as one might wish. In French.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; July 17-18.)

THREE THE HARD WAY (1974)—Jim Brown, Fred Williamson, and Jim Kelly thwart white supremacists who plan to infect the country's water supply with a poison that will kill blacks only. Apart from the scenes of Kelly transfixing opponents with split seconds of fierce attitude and three special-guest dominatrices reducing one fascist to a gibbering mass, what's most amusing is the songs. Written by Richard Tufo and Lowrell Simon and sung by the Impressions, they state the heroes' feelings and goals and even bring the macho trio up to speed on the plot whenever the screenwriters (Eric Bercovici and Jerry Ludwig) fall down on the job. The prodigious Lucien Ballard did the cinematography; without credits, you'd never guess. Gordon Parks, Jr., directed.—M.S. (Film Forum 2; through July 13.)

VOLPONE (1939)—Louis Jouvet is the shameless, swindling Mosca to the crafty, raucous old Volpone of the great Harry Baur, but they both seem tired. Maurice Tourneur directed this fairly straightforward version of the Ben Jonson satire, which is, however, weighed down by the lavish production, and maybe also by the threat of Hitler. In French.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; July 14.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)—Through July 13: "Black Caesar" (1973, Larry Cohen), with Fred Williamson, and "Three the Hard Way" (†). . . . ¶ July 14-16: "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song" (1971, Melvin Van Peebles). . . . ¶ July 17: "The Legend of Nigger Charley" (1972, Martin Goldman), with Williamson, and "Thomasine & Bushrod" (1974, Gordon Parks, Jr.), with Max Julien and Vonetta McGee. . . . ¶ From July 18: "Black Eye" (1974, Jack Arnold), with Williamson, and "Black Gunn" (1972, Robert Hartford-Davis), with Jim Brown.

LITTLE THEATRE, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)—July 12-13 at 7: "Open Doors" (1990, Gianni Amelio; in Italian) and "Love and Anarchy" (1973, Lina Wertmüller; in Italian). . . . ¶ July 14-16 at 7: "La Totale" (1991, Claude Zidi; in French). . . . ¶ July 14-16 at 9: "Les Bronzés" (1978, Patrice Leconte; in French). . . . ¶ July 18 at 7: "Marche à l'Ombre" (1984, Michel Blanc; in French). . . . ¶ July 18 at 9: "Et la Tendresse?. . . Bordel!" (1978, Patrick Schulmann; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films made from Broadway plays. July 13 at 2:30: "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" (1940, John Cromwell). . . . ¶ July 13 at 6: "Blessed Event" (1932, Roy Del Ruth). . . . ¶ July 14 at 2:30: "The Barker" (1928, George Fitzmaurice; silent). . . . ¶ July 14 at 6: "Five Star Final" (1931, Mervyn LeRoy). . . . ¶ July 14 at 8: "Tonight or Never" (1931, LeRoy). . . . ¶ July 15 at 1 and July 17 at 6: "Craig's Wife" (1936, Dorothy Arzner). . . . ¶ July 15 at 3 and July 18 at 1: "Jezebel" (1938, William Wyler). . . . ¶ July 15 at 5 and July 18 at 3: "Old Acquaintance" (†). . . . ¶ July 16 at 12:30: "The Greeks Had a Word for Them" (†). . . .¶ July 16 at 2: "The Women" (1939, George Cukor). . . . ¶ July 16 at 5: "Susan and God" (1940, Cukor). . . . ¶ July 17 at 1: "His Girl Friday" (1940, Howard Hawks). . . . ¶ July 17 at 3: "My Sister Eileen" (1942, Alexander Hall). . . . ¶ July 18 at 6: "The Little Foxes" (1941, Wyler).

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—French comedies, from the silent era to the present. July 13 at 2 and July 15 at 4 and 8: "La Poison" (1956, Sacha Guitry). . . . July 13 at 4 and July 15 at 6 and 10: "Lovers and Thieves" (1957, Guitry). . . . July 14 at 2, 6, and 10: "Quatorze Juillet" (1932, René Clair). . . . July 14 at 4 and 8: "Volpone" (†). . . . July 16 at 4 and 7:50: "A Woman Is a Woman" (1961, Jean-Luc Godard). . . . July 16 at 5:50 and 9:40: "Get Out Your Handkerchiefs" (1978, Bertrand Blier). . . . July 17 at 2, 6, and 10 and July 18 at 3:45: "The Red Inn" (†). . . . July 17 at 4:15 and 8:15 and July 18 at 2: "Four Bags Full" (1957, Claude Autant-Lara). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. July 15-16 at 2: "The Little Colonel" (1935, David Butler), with Shirley Temple.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Films by Orson Welles. July 15 at 2: "Macbeth" (†). . . . ¶ July 15 at 4: "The Stranger" (1946). . . . ¶ July 16 at 2: "The Lady from Shanghai" (1948). . . . ¶ July 16 at 4: "Touch of Evil" (1958).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Saturday- and Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On July 15 at 7, the feature will be "A Question of Silence" (1983, Marleen Gorris; in Dutch); on July 16 at 7, "The Love Machine" (1971, Jack Haley, Jr.).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—July 12 at 7: "The Smile" (1994, Claude Miller; in French). . . . ¶ July 18 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Clean Slate" (1981, Bertrand Tavernier; in French).

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (570-3949)—July 14-15 at 7: "Shane" (1953, George Stevens).

BRYANT PARK, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with Looney Tunes and coming attractions. The feature on July 17 will be "Born Yesterday" (1950, George Cukor). (Rain date is the following night.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—July 12 at 12:30: "Rear Window" (1954, Alfred Hitchcock). . . . ¶ July 12 at 3:30: "Blow-Up" (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni). . . . ¶ July 13 at 2:30 and July 14-16 at 3:30: "Vertigo" (1958, Hitchcock). . . . ¶ July 13 at 5:30 and July 14-16 at 12:30: "The Killers" (1946, Robert Siodmak).

FILM AL FRESCO, at Le Madri Restaurant, 168 W. 18th St. (727-8022)—Sunday evenings, more films out-of-doors, with food and live music beginning at 6 and the main feature starting at about 8:30. On July 16, the feature will be "Like Water for Chocolate" (1993, Alfonso Arau; a Mexican film, in Spanish).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—July 14 at 8: Short films by Dimitri Kirsanoff, René Clair, and others. . . . ¶ July 14 at 9:30: "Rapt" (1934, Kirsanoff). . . . ¶ July 15 at 4 and July 16 at 7: "Venom and Eternity" (1951, Jean Isidore Isou). . . . ¶ July 15 at 6 and July 16 at 5: Two different programs of short films by Georges Méliès. . . . ¶ July 15 at 8: "Diaries, Notes & Sketches" (1969, Jonas Mekas). . . . ¶ July 16 at 9: Short avant-garde films from Austria.

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE FIRE CHIEF AND THE FUGITIVE

Howard Safir

AT lunch the other day at an Italian restaurant in Tribeca, Howard Safir, New York City's Fire Commissioner, who is six feet three and clean-cut, with a military bearing, glanced at his analog pager, which had just gone off, and said matter-of-factly, "Second-alarm fire, East Sixty-first Street." It normally takes a four-alarmer to compel Safir's presence, so he resumed telling the remarkable story of his past life in public service. Like Mayor Giuliani, who appointed him, Safir is a former Fed. Between 1979 and 1990, he was the chief of operations of the United States Marshals Service, and, as such, the nation's top fugitive hunter. The arrest, in May, of the swindler Robert Vesco by the Cuban government, at his villa in suburban Havana, is a turnabout that Safir speaks of with no small degree of satisfaction. It also enables him to talk publicly, for the first time, about his hunt for Vesco, who twice escaped his clutches so narrowly that it seemed the fugitive had an inexhaustible supply of luck.

Safir, who is fifty-three, had worked for thirteen years as an agent of the Drug Enforcement Administration before he arrived at the Marshals Service, in 1978. Over the years, the service had largely abdicated to the F.B.I. its role in the hunt for fugitives from federal justice. Safir not only seized back the mandate but showed a willingness—even an eagerness—to pursue fugitives by inventive and frequently risky means: what he calls "extraordinary renditions." In 1982, Safir helped capture the C.I.A. rogue Edwin Wilson by luring him from Libya to the Dominican Republic. "To me, there's *nothing* worse than a fugitive," Safir said. "And nothing in law enforcement requires more creativity than crawling into someone else's mind and figuring out where he is and what he's doing."

To Safir, Vesco, who, though he never completed high school, became a wealthy New York financier, was a particularly galling fugitive. Vesco fled first to the Bahamas in 1971 to evade an investigation into whether he had bilked a large mutual fund of a quarter of a billion dollars. He moved about the Caribbean for a decade and finally settled in Cuba, where the government evidently regarded him as a financially astute man who might generate income for his new homeland. Two United States grand juries have indeed charged Vesco with participating in the drug trade during his time in Cuba. "Robert Vesco was one of those people who consider themselves citizens of the world, inconvenienced by laws," Safir said.

A YEAR or so after Vesco arrived in Cuba, a career criminal named Adolph Loia was escorted into Safir's office, in Tysons Corner, Virginia. Loia claimed that he had befriended Vesco while working as a croupier in the Bahamas, and said that in return for assistance with a drug charge in Florida he could help the Feds get to Vesco. Safir was skeptical. "There's the phone. Pick it up and call him," he remembered telling Loia. Moments later, Loia had Vesco on the line. Safir took the phone and, in a highly unorthodox move for an official of his rank, drew on his undercover training in the D.E.A. and introduced himself to Vesco as Alfie, a bad guy who was interested in transacting some illegal business.

Around that time, thieves in London had knocked off an armored car full of gold bars. Safir told Vesco that he, Alfie, had masterminded the robbery and would like Vesco to fence the gold for him. To bolster his claim, Safir had a replica made of a British-minted one-quarter-gold ingot, and Loia delivered it to Vesco in Havana. Vesco agreed to meet with Alfie in the Turks and Caicos Islands, near the Bahamas, where Safir planned to have him seized and put on a plane to the United States. But, at the last minute, Vesco was prevented from going by his Cuban handler, a colonel in the Interior Ministry named Antonio de la Guardia and nicknamed Ice Water.

On another occasion, about nine months later, Safir, as Alfie, told Vesco that he and Loia had used bribery to obtain control of cable-television rights in the Dominican Republic. He said that they wanted Vesco to meet them there and become a partner in what was certain to be a very lucrative venture. Vesco left Havana on a Cubana Airlines jet and landed at the airport in Managua, Nicaragua, where, according to the plan, he would be met

Target: Robert Vesco

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDIESTON

by Loia and taken on Loia's private plane to the Dominican Republic. As usual, Vesco was travelling with de la Guardia. Loia boarded the Cubana jet and was about to escort Vesco to his plane, but de la Guardia refused to let Vesco leave. Perhaps it had suddenly occurred to de la Guardia that if the Dominican cable-TV deal was too successful Vesco might not return to Cuba. Vesco was disappointed, as was Safir, who at that moment was rocking back and forth on a swing on the porch of a Dominican general's home, waiting for Loia's plane to land.

Safir may have helped set the stage for Vesco's recent arrest with yet another extraordinary rendition. He created a dummy company in Miami called the Spocko Corporation, which, Vesco was told, was prepared to violate federal law and sell valuable communications hardware to Cuba. Safir said Vesco arranged for Cuba to pay Spocko more than a million dollars for hardware that never arrived. Upon Vesco's arrest, Cuban officials spoke vaguely of his suspected role as a "provocateur and agent" for an unnamed foreign government, but it is far more likely that Vesco simply failed as a dealmaker for Cuba. "Vesco has been in disfavor with the Cubans for a long time," Safir said. "And I helped him get there."

It now appears that Cuba will not return Vesco to the United States, but Safir is not dismayed. "A Cuban jail is not a very pleasant place," he said, adding, "On balance, Robert Vesco is really a stupid man. If he had done his time"—for that initial crime of looting the mutual fund—"it would probably not have been for very long. Look at Michael Milken. Instead, Vesco has now served a sentence of a quarter century on the run."

TRUST FUNDING

Some names of charitable donors are chiselled in marble, others glide out of the fax machine like a press release. "Dear —: I have been asked to take part in an exercise to raise at least $250,000 to help the Romanian Orphanage Trust." This letter, which arrived last week, asks for three dollars—"no more," it warns—to help a British charity support Romanian families willing to offer homes to Romanian orphans. It then asks for one more thing: "Please retype this letter on your own letterhead and send it to ten individuals."

Demi Moore did. So did Kate Capshaw. Ditto Kevin Kline and Mary Ellen Zemeckis (wife of Robert). As with the self-conscious chain letter that seeped out of Hollywood several years ago promising good luck to those who passed it on and bad luck to those who didn't, photocopied lists of recipients are enclosed in each new appeal. For instance:

Demi Moore has sent this letter to the following:

1. Meg Ryan
2. Lynda Guber
3. Irwin Winkler
4. Brian Gibson
5. Linda Marder
6. Mary Ellen Zemeckis
7. Bryan Lourd
8. Richard Lovett
9. Rita Wilson
10. Nancy Chapman

Like the earlier Hollywood chain letter, this new entreaty has people on both coasts dissecting the lists of names as exhaustively as the C.I.A. once analyzed the order of Politburo members on the reviewing stand in Red Square. ("I didn't know Demi and Meg were such good friends." "Why is Don Simpson first on Barry Josephson's list?")

The lists are prime examples of the nineties phenomenon of celebrity friendship—the ethos of "I'm not a celebrity myself, but some of my best friends are," which has made introductions such as the following routine: "You know Jill, don't you? She's a friend of Barbra Streisand's." (No. 5 on Mary Ellen Zemeckis's list.)

Thomas Aquinas declared charity the root of all virtue, the Latin *caritas* being the translation of the Greek word *agape*, which signified the reciprocal spiritual love between God and man. But charity today is rarely spiritual, and, since three dollars is not a great deal of money (it represents .00000024 per cent of the twelve and a half million dollars Demi Moore is receiving for the movie "Striptease"), the Orphanage Trust is depending not on the quantity of the donation but on the quantity of donors. Yes, Mary Ellen Zemeckis can afford more than three dollars (and so can Maria Shriver, Goldie Hawn, and Sherry Lansing—Nos. 1, 3, and 7, respectively, on her list), but the total does add up. The Orphanage Trust letter is actually an altruistic Ponzi scheme, a benign pyramid where the money—more than two hundred thousand dollars in the last two years—goes directly to the beneficiaries. "The letter is by far the most efficient fund-raising we do," says Don McCready, the chief executive of the charity. "Because it's free."

TAXI

Why don't we cruise
Times Square at noon
enjoy the jam
I'm not immune
to your deft charm
in one stalled car
I'd like to take
you as you are

—Elise Paschen

THE BIG PRINCE

About twenty-four hours after he hosted a tribute to the late George Abbott, Hal Prince—age sixty-seven, the winner of twenty Tony Awards and the director and/or producer (often with Abbott) of more than fifty Broadway plays and musicals, including "Show Boat," "The Phantom of the Opera," "Evita," "Candide," "Follies," "Company," "Fiddler on the Roof," "West Side Story," and "Damn Yankees," among others—gave a "master class" at the Manhattan School of Music, in front of sixteen young, job-needy, please-like-me-expressioned, indoor-complexioned, not-well-nourished-looking enrollees in a three-week summer crash course called the Professional Musical Theatre Workshop.

Prince said that he, at the age of twenty, not having the slightest idea of how to get a theatre job, walked into Abbott's office and offered to work as a messenger-receptionist for nothing. "It was what I wanted. I was scared, nervous—but I *wanted* it," Prince said, in his well-known raspy voice, punctuated with his tense, high-energy body language. Now white-bearded, outdoor-complexioned, well-nourished-looking, wearing carefully nondescript tan pants, a blue denim shirt, and sockless loafers, Prince looked apologetically but bravely from one of the expectant enrollees to another. "I'm a very lucky fellow," he said. "I know it. I've always known it."

Prince's listeners seemed to be drifting a bit. He tried to be even more cheerfully insistent. "You've got to be obsessed with what you want. *I* was. I don't even want to share *how* obsessed."

Soon, questions rolled in from the

practical-minded. A young woman from Birmingham, Alabama, said she loved working with her local theatre group, but she found that it entailed socializing with people in the community who just wanted to do theatre work as a way of ingratiating themselves with other people in the community.

"Boy, you pinpointed what drives a guy like me crazy," Prince said. "That social, self-congratulatory thing."

"I realize I've been optimistic," the young woman said. "I've been in denial."

"Hurdles are often self-imposed," Prince said. "The trouble is, some people have their eyes on the prize, not on the journey. The journey is the fun of it. To be a director, you must direct. To be a singer, you must sing."

A practical question: "It seems so hard to get a show going. What's the first step?"

Answer: "There are a lot of good actors, and a lot of good places, little places, where you can put on a play and get somebody to come to see it. If the door slams, push it down. If you want it, if you really want it, you'll have it. I've always wanted it. I was eight years old, a middle-class Jewish kid. On Saturdays, I was taken to the theatre, not the ballpark. Suddenly, I was twelve, and I went alone. I was weaned on the second balcony. Do you know how *terrific* it is to sit in the second balcony?"

It was difficult to tell whether the enrollees were tuning in.

Question: "Is it worthwhile to be in 'Guys and Dolls' on the road?"

Answer: "To be seen? Always. You won't get rich. I never went into the theatre to get rich. I'm well-to-do, but I'm not really rich." Prince looked guilty and, again, apologetic.

He then offered some pointers: "You *work*. You don't miss a performance. I've heard that when Mary Martin was sick, she slept in the hospital every night, but she never missed a performance. That's the kind of commitment I respect." And: "In your audition, you want to be direct, honest, uncomplicated. Just let us *see* you. Let your mind animate it. Stand there and be truthful."

Someone asked about nerves, and he said, "Take it and turn it into energy."

Prince's own nerves were beginning to show. He turned them into body energy. He held his arms out to them. "It's a generous, joyful craft to be around if you're willing to work," he said.

ARRIVING

ANOTHER summer. Back to the old house in Wellfleet, on Cape Cod. Thoreau country. I think of "Little Gidding," from Eliot's "Four Quartets":

> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first
> time.

I open the door, glance around the old rooms, experience the strange sensation that I have been away not an entire winter but about twenty minutes. Old familiar steep and narrow staircase, old familiar pictures: the print of Ibsen; the print of the overfed, much too contented cat; the cherished oils of beach and woods by friends and neighbors.

Hey, buddy, knock off the aesthetics! Get real. You've got *problems*. Raccoons have been in the attic, living it up like Donald Trump. Smartest little creatures east of the Mississippi. Could run the whole damn country, just with their prehensile thumbs. I call the raccoon man for help; says he'll come. There's a dead mouse somewhere under the house, making its presence known. A domesticated squirrel, nowhere to be seen, has been dining on a window frame in the sitting room, near the Audubon reproduction of the belted kingfishers. (The female is swallowing a fish.) The squirrel has almost shaved down the muntins. My wife has gone upstairs. "Toilet's on the fritz!" she calls down. "Get the plumber!" (The equivalent of finding Jimmy Hoffa.) Mirabile dictu, I reach the plumber. "Look, Skipper," he says. "That toilet went through the Great Depression. That toilet is a dead toilet—once gulped five gallons of water every flush. I'll give you something new—flushes only a gallon and a half and you'll win an environmental medal." I order the toilet. Then I discover we're out of propane gas, but the gas man can't get his truck here until we clear away a giant felled beech tree that blocks the road to the tank. And there's bright-yellow pine pollen deeply settled everywhere. It's gesundheit time at the old homestead, and I forage for Kleenex.

To hell with dead mice, hungry squirrels, high-I.Q. raccoons, and pollen, too. Feel sudden need to reconnect with the outdoors. Take twenty-minute walk down to the Atlantic Ocean. Pass gleaming freshwater kettle-hole ponds, left over from glacial times. Pass small Herring River, and spy darting schools of alewives that have been spawning in nearby Gull Pond and are now heading toward Massachusetts Bay and the open ocean, so that, as the legend goes, they can make their annual trip back to Norway and joyous smorgasbords. Beach grass waving silkily, wild roses clumped near beach, beach itself, and high dunes, in resilient form. Walk back from the beach and reach the Old King's Highway. Some say that it ran from Boston to Provincetown, and if you look closely you can see deep ruts left by carts and carriages in bygone times.

Back to the house. A thousand bees are swarming around, near an attic window. They have been away two, three years, but apparently the queen also missed the old place and decided to come home. In a sense, I'm in Heaven. Perhaps I'm a bee. I think of Emily Dickinson:

> The Pedigree of Honey
> Does not concern the Bee—
> A Clover, any time, to him,
> Is Aristocracy.

—PHILIP HAMBURGER

RUDY'S T.L.C. GUY

BEFORE Mayor Giuliani appointed him the new chairman of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, Christopher R. Lynn, who is forty-five, gay, and H.I.V. positive, had about as much experience with cabs as the average New Yorker: he had ridden in them. Now his life is a torrent of mustardy hues, car horns, and statistics about taxis, liveries, and limos. Lynn is slightly chubby, has a thick Boston accent, and dresses like a lawyer: blue pin-striped shirt, tortoiseshell glasses, Mont Blanc pen in his breast pocket. He is best known around town for the work he has done in that uniform as a criminal-defense attorney and as an activist for gay rights. He defended the so-called Dignity 9, a group of gay-rights demonstrators arrested for staging a protest at St. Patrick's Cathedral. He led the challenge to the city's ban on gay bathhouses. And until recently he was a party-line Democrat.

But in 1992, when he learned he was H.I.V. positive, Lynn adopted a new ideology: impatience. Weary of what he viewed as Democratic Party ineffectiveness, he endorsed Giuliani over David Dinkins. "I found him totally sincere and totally unprogrammed," Lynn said. That endorsement, and Lynn's public defense of Ruben Diaz, a Bronx minister who hysterically denounced last summer's Gay Games as an AIDS threat to New York, have made Lynn a pariah among gay activists. "I have been called a traitor," he said. "I get booed. I have friends who don't speak to me."

Luckily for Lynn, the Mayor has apparently acquired a deep respect for those who risk their political necks by endorsing another party's candidate, and he rewarded Lynn's obstinacy with the T.L.C. appointment. Things at his new job move at a bureaucracy's syrupy pace, and that doesn't suit Lynn at all. He demands answers of his employees "in twenty-five words or less" (a favorite phrase), and has ordered them to post signs by their desks saying, "Let's get it done!" He has instituted staff meetings in which employees are expected to state their weekly goals and to apologize to their colleagues if they fail to meet them. The employees, if not enthusiastic, seem at least intrigued by the hokey techniques. In Lynn's presence, one employee cooed, "He's the first chairman to actually ask, 'Who works here?' It's amazing—we're all energized." Whereupon Lynn commented, "I don't want any sycophants, either."

Lynn has a more substantive agenda, as well. He is establishing an E-mail address for taxi complaints, an initiative that might fry the circuits of the Internet. He wants to increase dramatically the fines that drivers are assessed for passing up passengers on the basis of race. And he is beginning to address a coming taxi crisis: Chevrolet, makers of the homely-looking Caprice Classic, still known to New Yorkers as "the new cab," is discontinuing the model, which could prompt a shortage of suitable vehicles.

LYNN'S most difficult task, and his long-term priority, will be improving the lot of New York's cabbies. While the value of a taxi medallion for an individual has almost tripled since 1982—the last one reportedly went for a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars—in that same period the drivers' take-home pay has remained roughly the same. "The whole industry is flourishing," Lynn said, "and the only people not benefitting are the drivers."

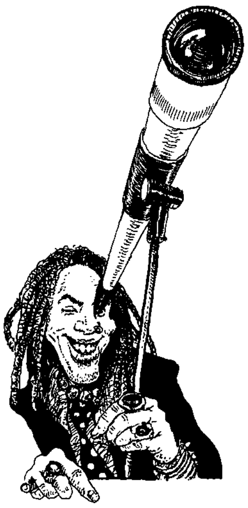
With his relative inexperience, Lynn may seem an unlikely champion of New York City cabbies. But at least in disposition, he has much in common with them. He shares their famous irascibility, their sudden capacity for warmth, and their deadpan humor. Recently, after a round of what he refers to as "kicking the hell" out of his staff, Lynn marched into an elevator and, as the doors closed, reflected aloud, "What do you think the people in the taxi industry thought when they heard a fag was going to be running the T.L.C.?"

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

A DOZEN or so birders occupying a spot near the Conservatory Water in Central Park, from which they could get a good view of a family of red-tailed hawks nesting atop a Fifth Avenue co-op, had the place much to themselves and their telescopes the other afternoon, until movie cameras began shooting scenes for "I'm Not Rappaport" at the Alice in Wonderland statue, just up the path. As the birders observed the father hawk flying through a phalanx of attacking crows, carrying a meal of fresh mouse for his three fledglings, a production assistant approached and asked them all to move back because they were in the shot. "Rolling!" he shouted, as if anybody cared.

When it was over, he thanked the birders for their coöperation, in the slightly patronizing way that movie people have when addressing the rest of us. That's when a passing bird scored a direct hit on his T-shirt.

"Serves him right," a white-haired woman with a pair of high-powered binoculars grumbled. Dedicated ornithologists crowded around to see whether it might be a hawk dropping. "Solid pigeon," one of them pronounced.



Lenny Kravitz

The birders weren't the only people inconvenienced by "I'm Not Rappaport." The rock star Lenny Kravitz had shown up with a film crew to use the Alice in Wonderland statue as the backdrop for what his publicist called an E.P.K., and then translated as an electronic press kit. But Kravitz was relegated to the Hans Christian Andersen statue, directly behind the spot that the birders had been banished to, so he lounged in the storyteller's lap while his crew filmed him eating a chocolate Popsicle.

Incongruous as the encounter of Kravitz, in his dreadlocks and bejewelled nostrils, and the birders, in their khakis and Bass Weejuns, may have seemed, it turned out that they had something in common: Kravitz's father, a birder himself.

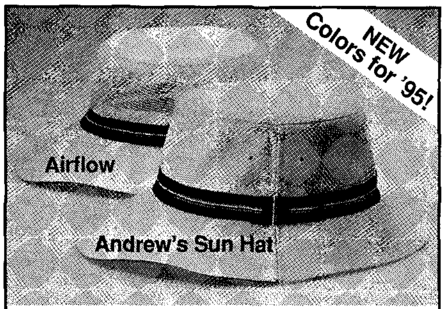
"I was talking to your dad the other day," one of them told him.

"He's been here every day watching," Kravitz affirmed. "He told me to come out."

Then someone suggested that Kravitz be a good son and take a look at the birds. He slid off Hans's lap and, with his camera crew in tow, sidled up to a free scope, removed his wraparound sunglasses, and peered into the eyepiece.

"Wow," he said. ♦

This week's contributors: Fredric Dannen and Ira Silverman, Richard Stengel, Lillian Ross, Warren St. John, Ralph Gardner, Jr.



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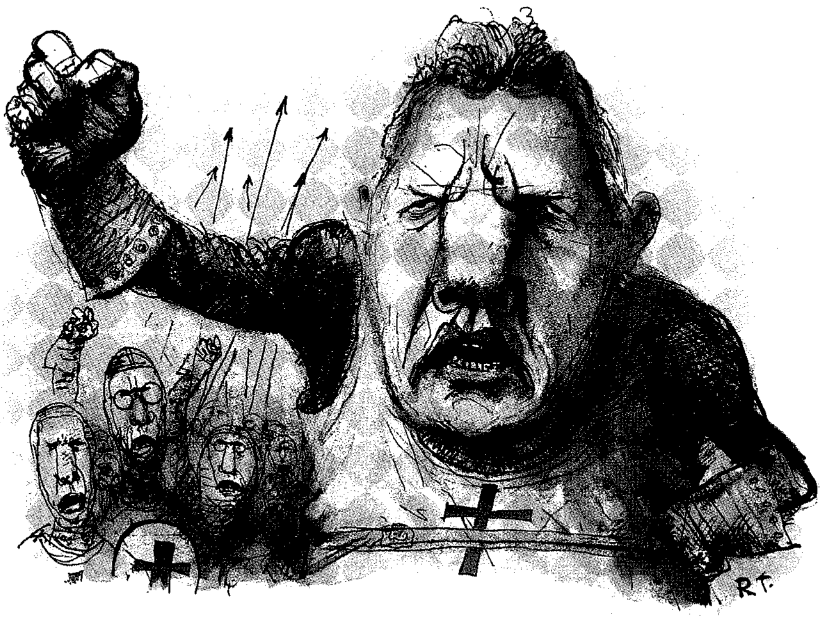
LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

THE MAN OF THE MINUTE

Morality is in, and the anti-rapper William Bennett has once again seized the moment. But the question remains: What happens when the moment passes?

BY MICHAEL KELLY

EVERY age must have its pitchman, and, as recent history has shown, William J. Bennett is it for the age of the new moral majority. In December, 1993, C. DeLores Tucker, the chairwoman of the National Political Congress of Black Women, began a campaign against gangsta rap, a genre of music which she believes is culturally deforming children, "destroying them, training black people to be not fit for a decent society." Tucker decided to focus her campaign on the entertainment giant Time Warner, which had invested more than a hundred million dollars in Interscope Records, the producer of some of the gangsta culture's most sociopathic material. In the cultural wars over obscenity and censorship, Tucker—a black, liberal, Democratic civil-rights activist—represented a new and potentially serious threat to the entertainment industry. But Time Warner kept its head down and counted on a lack of sustained press attention, and for a time that seemed to work well. Then, last March, the *U.S. News & World Report* columnist John Leo called Time Warner's fifty-per-cent stake in Interscope "the cultural equivalent of owning half of the world's mustard-gas factories." Leo's column generated two important telephone calls. One was from the Time Warner chairman, Gerald Levin. "He said, 'Why don't you write about Murdoch? He's worse than we are,' " Leo recalled. "I thought that was a pretty sad statement." The other call was from Bill Bennett, expressing outrage.



Bennett: A leading voice of a force that is driving American politics—for now.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Bennett's interest in the issue came to the attention of Barbara Wyatt. Wyatt is the president of the Parents' Music Resource Center, the original anti-dirty-music group, which was founded by Tipper Gore and three other prominent Washington women in 1985 but has since faded. A large, loud force of media nature like Bennett, Wyatt thought, could rejuvenate the cause; she approached Tucker with the idea of forming a three-way coalition, spearheaded by Bennett. The two women met with Bennett, who immediately proposed ratcheting up the pressure on Time Warner through a campaign of public confrontation and denunciation centered on a television commercial to air around the time of the company's annual shareholders' meeting. Levin agreed to talks (to be held after the shareholders' meeting) between, on one side, Bennett, Tucker, and Wyatt, and, on the other, the company's president, Richard Parsons; Warner Music Group's chairman, Michael Fuchs; and Warner Music's U.S. chairman, Doug Morris. At the meeting, Bennett stole the show. Again and again, he challenged and insulted the Time Warner leaders, culminating with his now famous response to Levin's claim that Time Warner would have met with its challengers in the absence of a public campaign of criticism. "Baloney," Bennett said.

That meeting, and Bennett's publicizing of it, struck a note that resonated widely throughout American politics. Quick as an overnight poll, the leading 1996 Republican Presidential contender, Senator Bob Dole, came out with an anti-Time Warner philippic. Sudden as a shift in the summer wind, Time Warner fired its most vocal apologist for gangsta rap, Doug Morris. At the end of June, the Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman, the chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council, which represents the moderate-conservative faction of the fractured Democratic Party, joined the Bennett-Tucker coalition. Time Warner executives were left shocked and bitter, raging profanely off the record that Bill Bennett had sandbagged them for the greater glory of Bill Bennett, and swearing on the record that nothing Bennett had done had affected them in the slightest.

The week Morris was fired, I interviewed Bennett in the Washington office of Empower America, the conservative think tank he co-directs with Jack Kemp. Earlier, I had asked DeLores Tucker how long she intended to continue the fight against Time Warner, and she replied, "I will die before I allow this filthy pornographic smut to be shown to our children." While Bennett told me, accurately, that he remains faithful to the larger cause—"It's always about kids, about drawing some lines, establishing some standards"—he is, in his mind, already moving on from the Time Warner battlefield. "You know," Bennett said, "this L.A. *Times* guy said to me the other day that he figured the next three years with me were all going to be about going after Time Warner and BMG and Sony—and I said, 'Hell, no. A couple of weeks, couple of months maybe. Then you have to move on to something else.' "

In Bill Bennett there is an everlasting tension between two opposing forces—the intellectual ideologue and the showman, the man of conviction and the manipulator of the media moment. He is, inarguably, an opportunist. He is also something of a bully, an overbearing ex-jock who traffics in confrontation and intimidation rather than reasoned discourse. He is rude. He is a professional working-class hero, playing not to the enlightened few in the boxes but to the vulgar many in the cheap seats. He is a Barnumesque sensationalist, a light-fingered popularizer of others' ideas, and an unregenerate middlebrow. He is quick to lose interest, and deeply disinclined toward anything that does not feature himself as the center of the action. He is a self-promoting, self-important sermonizer.

And yet, equally inarguably, the fifty-one-year-old Bennett is genuine in the passion of his preaching, and serious in his concerns over the state of the culture. He cares about real things that matter—the destruction wrought by the drug epidemic, the crisis of black America, the failure of the education system to educate, the character of the nation—and if he is flighty in his attention to the particulars, he is steadfast in the broad sense. In one way or another, he has been advancing the same argument, pushing these same causes, for nearly two decades.

By all accounts, including those of his enemies, Bennett works hard at practicing the virtues he preaches: he is a faithful husband to his wife of thirteen years, Elayne, an attentive father to his two sons, and a weekly worshipper at the Blessed Sacrament church, in Washington, D.C. When Bob Dole or Phil Gramm or Pete Wilson or Newt Gingrich declaims on the subject of family values—the social cost of divorce and illegitimacy, and the suffering caused by men who abandon their families—their words are undermined by the fact that each of them is on his second wife. Bennett, on the other hand, is comfortable denouncing not only walk-out husbands and fathers of the inner city but also those of his own class—successful middle-aged white men gone in search of trophy wives. "Is there any limit to how many wives you can have?" he asks. "Is there any sense of shame? And this is where conservatives need to 'fess up, and say that a lot of conservative fathers have walked out, too."

Bennett's singular blend of conviction and opportunism has made him rich and famous. Bennett, Inc., as some of his friends call his multimillion-dollar industry, has a product line headed by "The Book of Virtues," Bennett's 1992 anthology of moral writings, which has made its compiler an estimated five million dollars; two lesser Bennett books are also in print, and another three are scheduled for rollout over the course of the next two years. His writings, and a heavy schedule of speaking engagements that command a stratospheric forty thousand dollars a pop, have transformed Bennett into a leading voice of the force that is driving American politics right now—the national hunger for a moral society.

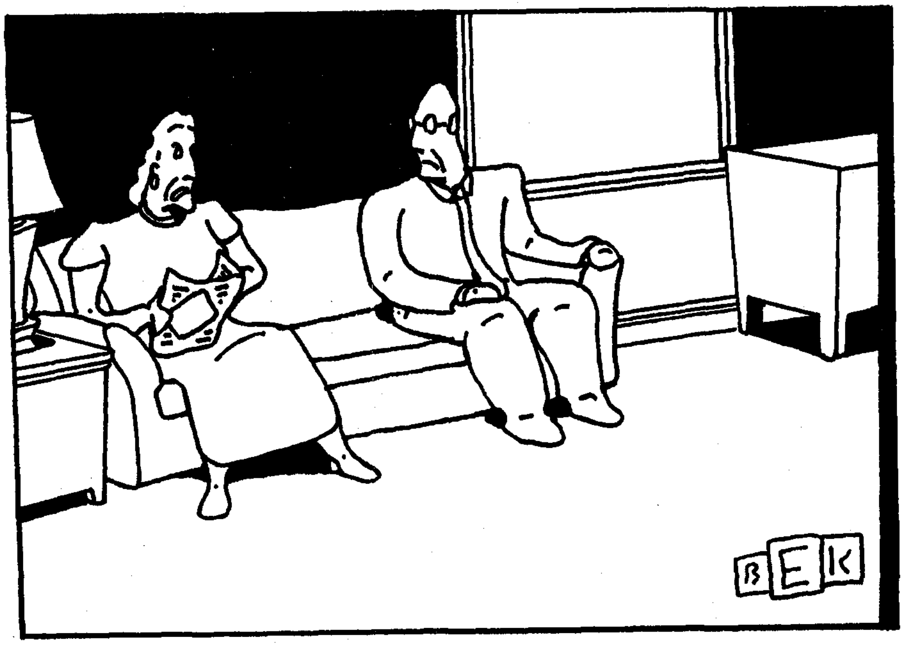
By this, different people mean different things. On the religious right, for instance, the moral society means, among other things, an end to abortion, the return of prayer in the schools, and the reëstablishment of traditional cultural values. On the left, defined by the politics of race, gender, and class, the moral society is concerned with such issues as the inequities of the social structure, the plight of the socially and economically oppressed, and the expansion of tolerance for behavior that runs against traditional standards—to the point of what Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has called "defining deviancy down." These left-right differences are glaring, but they conceal an underlying commonality of viewpoint which cuts across lines of party, race, sex, and ideology to form a consensus understanding of what a moral society should be—and a consensus fear that America is not one.

In this convergence, the moral society is one that allows all its citizens—and not just its upper-class ones—to lead decent lives. It is a society that protects people from violent crime, provides a healthy atmosphere in which to raise and educate children, affords working-class people housing in clean, safe neighborhoods, and recognizes the traditional family as the essential social unit. The moral society is unified by a shared commitment to civic responsibility and by common values that are rooted in religion and patriotism. It balances rights with responsibilities, and is not afraid to be judgmental—to demand that people adhere to a high standard of behavior.

Bennett grasps the concept of this emerging moral consensus probably better than anyone else in politics, and certainly exploits it better. He has figured out the ground where the right and the left meet—in the growing concern over the trashing of popular culture, for instance—and he is a genius at selling this new moral activism. As was demonstrated by the alliance with DeLores Tucker—a Republican and a Democrat, a man and a woman, a conservative and a liberal, a white and a black—he understands what the executives at Time Warner might call the idea's crossover appeal.

Thirty years ago, the young Bennett found a mentor at Williams College, in the well-known left-wing activist the Reverend William Sloane Coffin. As Bennett grew disillusioned with liberalism over the years and moved from left to right, Coffin watched with disapproval—until now. "I think it a good thing that he and this black woman joined forces to attack violence and all that in the record industry," Coffin told me. "I like a black woman and a white man and a left-wing and a right-wing getting together like this. I like them saying to these guys, 'You people are exploiting these children, you are making yourselves a nice little pot of money off this evil.' One thing I have always held against the right wing is that they attack the permissiveness of the individual but not the permissiveness of the corporation—not the greed of the marketplace. And now here comes Bennett looking at personal responsibility in a new way—the personal responsibility of the people who are making money by playing off the worst instincts of others."

Bennett comes by both the serious and the opportunistic sides of his nature honestly. He was born to be a social moralist—to be a traditional liberal Democrat. In the national political era that began roughly in 1901 with the succession of the young Theodore Roosevelt to the Presidency after the assassination of William McKinley, a moral vision of society was central to liberal Democratic politics. The ideal of the ethical society—safe, decent, egalitarian, fair—was the animating force behind great advances from the New Deal to the civil-rights movement. The Democratic Party's ability to articulate and legislatively enact this ideal made it for nearly half a century the nation's dominant party, and liberalism the majority philosophy in American politics. Bennett, the second son of a middle-class, Irish Catholic divorced mother in Brooklyn, grew up in a world defined by Democratic social moralism. His conviction that society must be ordered along moral lines was reaffirmed at Washington, D.C.,'s Jesuit high school, Gonzaga, a place of sufficient stricture that Bennett recalls getting into trouble for reading James Joyce's "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." As an undergraduate student at Williams College during the mid-nineteen-sixties, Bennett was, by his own account, "involved with left-wing stuff," such as civil rights. His liberal mentor, Coffin, guided Bennett to the University of Texas for graduate study in philosophy and, he recalls, into the hands of the philosophy professor John Silber—who would later become famous for his combative conservatism as president of Boston University but who was then so liberal that he served as an adviser to the Students for a Democratic Society. "There was a whole Texas populist crowd there—Silber and Barbara Jordan and Ronnie Dugger," Bennett remembers. "It was a very exciting time. Silber went over to a sorority to give a luncheon speech and found out they didn't have any blacks, and that their policy was to keep blacks out, and so he changed his speech and just kicked the hell out of them."


"In case you hadn't noticed, I stopped being your kumquat years ago."

The seize-the-moment theatricality that is the flip side of Bennett's ideological conviction likewise seems bred in the bone. In a political career that is still only a little more than a decade old, Bennett has exhibited a talent for feeding the media's appetite for confrontation, in order to advance the cause of cultural conservatism. In 1981, President Reagan appointed Bennett, then the little-known president of a humanities think tank in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, to head the National Endowment for the Humanities, a job at the center of the dawning wars over the nation's values and culture. Three months later, Bennett engineered his first great public stunt—a paradigmatic act that married an honest passion for the cause with an honest passion for the camera—when he denounced a federally funded television documentary on the Nicaraguan revolution as "unabashed socialist-realism propaganda." The day after he was confirmed as Secretary of Education, in 1985, Bennett took advantage of a courtesy call from the president of the National Education Association to inform the official that he intended to have a confrontational relationship with the N.E.A., because he regarded the teachers' union as "a big part of the problem" in American education. Appointed by George Bush to be the nation's first "drug czar," in 1989, he began his tenure by an-

THE WAY THINGS ARE IN FRANKLIN

Even the undertaker is going out
of business. And since the dime store closed,
we can't get parakeets on Main Street
anymore, or sleeveless gingham smocks
for keeping Church Fair pie off the ample
fronts of the strong, garrulous wives
of pipefitters and road agents.
The hardware's done for, too.

Yesterday,
a Sunday, I saw the proprietors breaking
up shop, the woman struggling with half
a dozen bicycle tires on each arm,
like bangle bracelets, the man balancing
boxes filled with Teflon pans. The windows
had been soaped to frustrate curiosity,
or pity, or that cheerless satisfaction
we sometimes feel when others fail.

—Jane Kenyon
(1947–1995)

nouncing that he would personally direct the war on drugs in Washington, D.C., because Marion Barry and his administration had "failed to serve its citizens," and ended it by calling Representative Charles Rangel, the chairman of the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, a "gasbag."

In all this, some central questions about Bennett have lingered, and they are, interestingly enough, questions of morality. Would he ever play a role beyond that of agent provocateur? Did he have what it takes to stick to a cause or a job when the going got tough or, worse, dull? These are questions that have come up any number of times—none more important than in 1990, when Bennett quit the position of national drug-control-policy director after only twenty months on the job. Bennett had pledged himself to the role of drug czar in the ringing tones of a moral crusader: "I am committed to reclaiming our streets, our communities and our children from the grip of drug abuse and the consequences of drug trafficking."

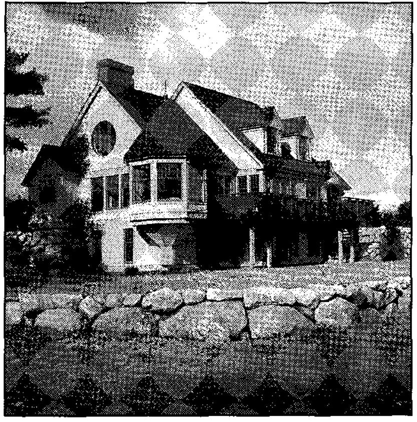
When Bennett left, he said the war on drugs was on track. The suggestion was that Bennett, the most high-profile campaigner in the anti-drug effort, could safely quit a fight that was nearly won. But Reggie Walton, a tough, anti-drug Washington judge whom Bennett had hired as a top deputy, disagrees. "To be candid, I was disappointed in him," Walton told me. "I had signed on with him because I felt there was going to be at least a four-year effort in addressing the problem. I do think he was concerned about the drug effort. I do not think he was just a phony who seized on the issue for publicity . . . but the reality is that his leaving did take the wind out of the effort. The issue became almost a dead issue without him, and without the appointment of a leader with commensurate skills. And it tremendously impacted on the momentum we had generated in the anti-drug effort."

When I told Bennett what Walton had said, his big, houndlike face folded along accustomed lines into an exaggerated, irritated frown—three deep vertical lines appearing above his bulwark of a nose, and his wide mouth drawing down at the corners. But when he replied his words were candid, even mildly contrite. "If the question is, did the anti-drug effort get less significant after I left?—yeah, it did," he said. "It *did* drift. A lot of people lost interest. If I had thought it was going to drift that badly, I wouldn't have left that early. But I was tired from three jobs in the government in a row, and was sort of ready to get out of the government. I thought the program was set on a good road, but it wasn't. I was wrong."

Today, the questions about Bennett are especially relevant. The 1996 Presidential election would seem to be Bennett's natural time—the perfect moment for a candidate of moral leadership, for someone to emerge as the national voice of the moral society. As it happens, such a political figure is emerging. But it is not Bennett. The man running for President as the voice of national morality is Patrick Buchanan. It is Buchanan, not Bennett, who is packing in the crowds in New Hampshire and around the country. As things stand now, Buchanan is shaping up as the Republicans' Jesse Jackson, the candidate of the Party's critical core vote (the religious right), the person who will walk into the Republican Convention in San Diego with the power to demand.

This is a deeply disquieting thought for Bennett. He and Buchanan have certain obvious points in common—they are both famous Irish-American politicians, both graduates of Gonzaga, and both strong cultural conservatives. But the two men are each other's polar opposite in their approaches to what Bennett sees as the critical question of our time: what sort of nation do we want to live in? The movement toward a moral society is up for grabs. Inherent in any politics of moralism is the danger of authoritarianism. The dark reverse of the good society is the totalitarian society. Bennett knows this, and he worries that the Buchanan vision represents not a clear path toward a society of moral consensus but a grave distortion of it. Bennett grew up in an F.D.R. home. Buchanan grew up in a home in which the respected men of politics were Joseph McCarthy and Generalissimo Franco. Bennett was, and continues to be, a true-believing integrationist. Buchanan, Bennett charges, is, in a sense far beyond race, a segregationist, one who separates the entire world into those who are born to the received wisdom (or who at least come early and deeply to it) and those who are not. "His view is, That's the way it is," Bennett told me. "Like it's God's will or something. This is it. That is it. It is spoken, it is written, it is done. We have been there, you have not."

When Bennett was asked to describe his own vision of the moral society, he



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referred to George Washington's letter to the Jews of Newport and said, "The idea is everyone should pursue his business as he will, and sit under the vine and the fig tree, and there will be no one to make him afraid. Except for some times when you're stepping on other people's rights, except when children are in the room, except within reasonable rules, that reasonable people of good will, from all faiths, can get together and agree on."

Bennett does not think that this is Buchanan's vision. "Pat is interested in dividing it up and saying, 'O.K., we know who we are over here and we know who you are over there,' " Bennett said. "I don't think he's interested in adding to his numbers." Buchanan, he suggested, is psychologically dedicated to an ever-finer parsing of ideological segregationism. "As I've said to him, the worst place to stand in a fight is *with* him, as someone who was on his side but has now deviated by one step," Bennett said. "It's a pathology of small differences with him. A real S & M kind of thing." I asked Bennett about an occasion, years before, when he had suggested that Buchanan was in some of his remarks flirting with fascism. "He's flirting with it," Bennett said now, his mouth in a tight line. "This Fortress America stuff, this You the People stuff—I think it's tricky."

It is obvious that Bennett believes strongly that Buchanan—whose fiery and exclusionary speech on cultural values at the 1992 Republican National Convention got far more attention than Bennett's more cerebral and less combative oration on the same subject—is once again in a position to become the national voice of Republican moral activism. "This party is not great on standing up to this kind of thing," Bennett said. "In 1992, we went hat in hand to Perot. So now maybe we'll go hat in hand to Pat: 'O.K., Pat, you know you're not going to be the nominee. We'll give you a fat spot on prime time, and we'll take seven of your planks.' " And it is obvious that Bennett thinks this would be a disaster. "Hell, no! Don't do it!" he said, as if he were yelling at Dole. He added, "We'll see what the Party does in San Diego. Pat will have to be confronted by people. It wouldn't be bad for Bob Dole, or Newt, or somebody to get in a fight with Pat about something."

The natural somebody to get into a fight with Buchanan would, of course, be Bennett. This thought has occurred to people who are influential in Republican politics. One evening last summer, a group of conservative game planners, including Bill Kristol, Rush Limbaugh, and the political strategist Mike Murphy (who is now advising Lamar Alexander's campaign), had dinner with Bennett to discuss potential strategy for a 1996 Presidential run. Kristol saw at least two reasons for Bennett's decision (after a period of reflection in what he has called "the beach house that virtue built") to issue a statement saying he would not run. First, Kristol said, "There is a certain humility in Bill; he doesn't think he necessarily should be President of the United States." The second reason is less admirable. "Bill has a dislike of the kind of responsibility that comes with being President," Kristol said. "In a way, he is still an intellectual in politics. He wants to be able to say what he wants to say, but he doesn't want to adopt what is called an ethic of responsibility."

Recently, Phil Gramm's supporters put out a feeler to Bennett, asking if he might be interested in a running-mate position—the natural spot from which to counter the Buchananite faction. Bennett said no. "You have to go through a lot of crud to get there," he explained. "And when you do get there you have to do a lot of stuff you don't want to do. And I really like doing what I like to do."

That is an understandable attitude. But doesn't it also constitute something of a moral weakness? In the end, the real question mark about Bennett is not whether he is an opportunist or a media hound. People with those qualities, you could argue, are precisely what made this country great. In the twentieth century's long run of progressivism, men like Teddy Roosevelt and F.D.R., John L. Lewis, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., Hubert Humphrey, and Robert Kennedy defined a national politics based on the ideal of the virtuous society. They were explicitly, passionately moralists. And they were also shameless publicists, demagogues, confrontationalists, and sensationalists. The difference between them and Bennett, at least so far, is that they got into the fight all the way—for keeps. They didn't move on to the next thing. And, because they didn't, this was their kind of country for a long time. ◆

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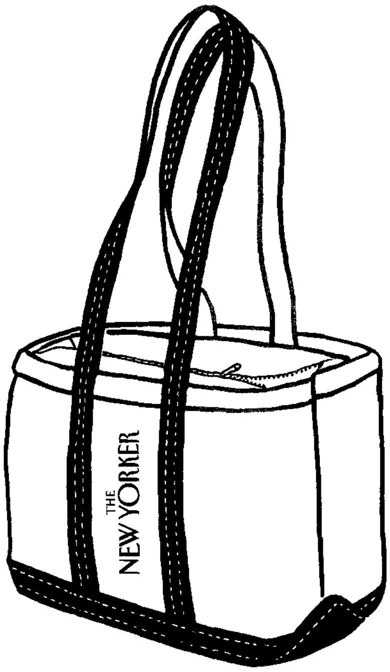

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ANNALS OF LAW

PUTTING IT IN BLACK AND WHITE

As the O. J. Simpson trial moves on to its final phase, the sharp racial division over his case endures—and the black press best explains why.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

THE government has rested, and Dennis Schatzman is unpersuaded. A forty-five-year-old black man, with a salt-and-pepper beard, oversized tortoiseshell glasses, and a predilection for brightly colored African robes, Schatzman covers the double-murder trial of O. J. Simpson for the Los Angeles *Sentinel*, a paid-circulation weekly devoted to the city's African-American community. "The prosecution's case was nothing but a six-million-dollar boondoggle," Schatzman said last Friday.

Schatzman has been shaking up his colleagues in the Simpson press corps since the beginning. The reporters who cover the trial straggle in every morning shortly after eight o'clock to collect their courtroom passes for the day. While they wait, in a dingy hallway on the twelfth floor of the Los Angeles Criminal Courts Building, they bellyache, trade gossip, and swap impressions of the latest developments in the case. One morning in February, shortly after opening statements, the group was discussing the previous day's witness—Ronald Shipp, a former police officer who had known the defendant for more than a decade. Shipp had testified that during the week after Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman were murdered O. J. Simpson had confided to him that he had "had some dreams of killing" Nicole. The consensus among the reporters—an all-white group that morning, as it happened—was that the testimony was credible and its impact substantial.

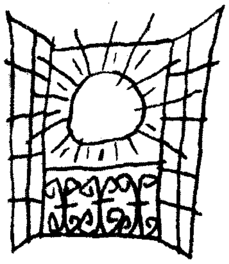
A new arrival's falsetto exclamation—at once indignant and amused—shattered the murmured unanimity. "Shee-ee-it!" said Schatzman, stretching the word out to several syllables. "Shipp is a drunk," Schatzman began. (The witness had admitted to problems with alcohol abuse in his past.) "He's a weak man. He's a hanger-on. He looked too plastic. A friend wouldn't say what he did—an opportunist would. Face it: the man just lied up there." Startled, even humbled, by the challenge to their conventional wisdom, the white reporters returned to court, uncharacteristically subdued.

As the case lurches toward conclusion, the racial divisions endure. (A recent Harris poll found that sixty per cent of whites believe Simpson is guilty, compared with only twelve per cent of African-Americans.) And nowhere can these divisions be seen

O. J. SIMPSON'S EX-WIFE, ... SLAIN
Were The Handcuffs Really Necessary?
BY DENNIS SCHATZMAN
A Grim O. J. Simpson Pleads 'Not Guilty' in Two Murders

Dennis Schatzman: "The easiest person in the world to convict is a black man."

MCDAVID HENDERSON



more starkly than in the radically different perspectives offered by the predominantly white mass media and the tiny but vocal and highly opinionated black press. It is a simplification (but not much of one) to say that the mainstream press increasingly views the Simpson case as a vaguely comic circus—one in which justice is likely to be thwarted by a strange mixture of television-obsessed lawyers, book-writing jurors, and sun-addled witnesses. Schatzman and his colleagues at the New York *Amsterdam News*, the Pittsburgh *Courier*, and the dozens of other weeklies and semiweeklies that scrap for survival well outside the purview of most white Americans likewise see a risk of injustice in the Simpson case. But in their view the case is a metaphor for the plight of blacks caught in the criminal-justice system. "The easiest person in the world to convict is a black man," Schatzman told me in one of many conversations over the past several months. "We're already guilty in the minds of the public. You don't even need evidence. What happened to O.J. has happened to a lot of black people. This is the case for people to see it."

The *Sentinel* has led the way in the black press's coverage of the Simpson case not only because it has devoted the most space to the subject but also because Schatzman's reports have been syndicated by the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the trade group for more than two hundred black papers. William Reed, the executive director of the N.N.P.A., told me, "Dennis is writing what the majority of black people are thinking about the situation." And, in a case likely soon to go to a jury that now includes nine African-Americans, the black press may offer some clues to how those jurors are reacting to the evidence as well.

DENNIS SCHATZMAN—his last name is a legacy from his paternal grandfather, a German Jewish immigrant to Pittsburgh who married a black woman—discovered the black press in the stacks of the campus library at the University of Pittsburgh in the early nineteen-seventies, while he was a student there. Young Schatzman spent countless hours cranking microfilm of the Pittsburgh *Courier*, which has long been one of the most distinguished black papers in the country, and where he himself later became an editor. "I became fascinated, looking at how they covered stories like World War One, the Scottsboro boys, and the early days of the civil-rights movement," Schatzman said. "It got to the point where they'd flick the lights at one in the morning and announce the library was closing, and I was such a regular that they'd get on the public-address system and say, 'Mr. Schatzman, it's time to go.' "

The *Courier* inspired generations of black journalists. "When I was growing up, during World War Two, my mother took the *Courier* even though we lived in Hartford," Chuck Stone told me recently. Stone served as editor-in-chief of three black papers before becoming a professor of journalism and mass communications at the University of North Carolina. "That was really the only way to find out what the black troops were doing." In those days, the black press provided African-American readers with virtually their only source of news about themselves, and African-American journalists with virtually their only source of employment. In the nineteen-forties, the Pittsburgh *Courier's* circulation soared to a nationwide readership of four hundred thousand. The postwar years, however, have been hard on black papers. "They've become partly victims of their own success," Stone said. "Blacks have been hired in substantial numbers by mainstream newspapers. There are black columnists everywhere now. It's like the Negro Leagues in baseball, or why the top black students now go to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. The price of integration is the failure of black institutions." The *Courier's* circulation currently stands at about thirty-five thousand.

These changes are apparent at Camp O.J., as the media compound at the trial has become known. Black reporters there play significant roles in several major news operations. Andrea Ford shares a byline on almost every day's main trial story in the Los Angeles *Times*. Kenneth B. Noble, of the New York *Times*, has played an important role in that paper's voluminous coverage of the story. And three black television reporters—Bill Whitaker, of CBS; Ron Allen, of ABC; and Marc Watts, of CNN—have logged abundant airtime on the case. In their work, neither these reporters nor other well-known African-American voices in the mainstream media have reflected the apparent near-consensus on the case in black America. The best-known black columnists—including Carl Rowan; William Raspberry, of the Washington *Post;* and Clarence Page, of the Chicago *Tribune*—have said little about the case and nothing particularly favorable about the defense. The black glossy magazines—those supported by national advertisers—have treated the case with caution. *Ebony*, the mass-circulation monthly, avoided the subject of the murders until last September, when it invited eight prominent African-Americans, carefully balanced between admirers and detractors of Simpson, to comment on "the larger meaning of the case."

Schatzman, though, rejoices in an environment where he feels no pressure to tailor his views to a white sensibility. He talks as he has lived—in a headlong rush of words, gestures, and Pittsburgh Steeler trivia. He spent his early career alternating between advocating and chronicling in a way that anticipated the passionate journalism he now practices. "I learned early on that I wanted power, and wanted people to listen to what I had to say," he told me. "This was the way." After college, Schatzman learned his trade as a reporter at the Baltimore *Afro-American*. That led to a public-relations job in the Maryland state government, to another p.r. job—at Carnegie Mellon, back in Pittsburgh—and, finally, in 1978, to the city editorship at the *Courier*. "I'd started to make a name for myself, and some people got together and asked me to run for judge in the Thirteenth Ward, which is a black part of town," he said. Pennsylvania has an unusual judicial system, which allows elected "district justices"—often non-lawyers, like Schatzman—to preside over minor criminal and civil matters. He won the election and ultimately handled about three thousand cases, mostly landlord-tenant disputes and petty crimes like disorderly conduct. "I liked the job, but the problem was, it was right in the neighborhood where I grew up," he said. "People with cases would come into court and say, 'Yo, Dennis—I mean, Your Honor.' Eventually, I had enough of that."

After two years as a judge, Schatzman, then thirty-three, stepped down to become the deputy controller of the

Pittsburgh school district. "I have a talent for offending the powers that be," Schatzman said. "So I was basically forced out of there a little while later." He moved to Washington for a short, unhappy stint as the executive director of the National Association of Black Journalists, and then went on to North Carolina, where he ended up heading that state's branch of the N.A.A.C.P. From these experiences, Schatzman said, "I learned I wasn't an administrator."

By 1990, Schatzman had returned to Washington. "It was a bad time," he said. "My marriage had dissolved, and, though I'd used drugs before, this was when I started to have a real problem." On November 17th of that year, while he was making a call at a pay telephone on Georgia Avenue, "these guys came out of a car and wanted to use the phone," he told me. "I let them have it and walked away, but one of them shot me in the back as I left. I probably would have died, but there was a guy on a porch across the street who was waiting for his dealer to bring him his stuff. He called 911—saved my life."

Schatzman spent eleven days in the hospital, without health insurance, and amassed a bill of about thirty-nine thousand dollars. His plight drew the attention of the *Post's* William Raspberry, who then wrote a column about him. "That's when I really discovered the power of the press," Schatzman told me, laughing. As a result of that column, he says, the District of Columbia whisked him to the front of the line for welfare benefits and helped him with his hospital bill. Friends in Pittsburgh held a fund-raiser for him. "I think I wound up paying only about twenty dollars out of my own pocket," he told me. "I spent six months recuperating and looking for the guy who shot me. I have to say that was a very angry period in my life, and I'm just starting to deal with it now. But the fact is that on May 5, 1991, I found the guy who shot me, and I busted two slugs in his ass, ditched the gun, got my duffelbag, and caught the Greyhound out here. I still don't know if the guy died or not. I needed a job, so I came to the *Sentinel.* They hired me as a proofreader for ten dollars an hour. They started letting me write, and I've been here ever since."

When I asked Schatzman why he would admit to shooting someone, he grew sombre. "I ain't ashamed to talk about it, and anyway I don't think I'm going to live that long. I've got this kind of stomach cancer. It's a family thing. I figure maybe I got two years." Then he brightened. "But I didn't tell you the guy's name, did I? I'm not going to, either."

THE *Sentinel*, which was founded in 1934, is a broadsheet, with a red-white-and-blue logo framed by the mottoes "The Largest Black-Owned Newspaper in the West" and "Education Will Lead to the Truth." Generally, the political views reflected in its pages are conventionally liberal; the paper's dominant theme, not surprisingly, is pride in African-American accomplishments, but it is expressed without ideological excesses in the mode of Louis Farrakhan or Leonard Jeffries. In many respects, the *Sentinel* is an old-fashioned paper, with extensive reporting of the cotillions and awards banquets in black society; the coverage is aimed at a settled and reasonably prosperous middle-class audience. (When, for example, Simpson's attorney Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr., received an award in December from a black philanthropic organization, the *Sentinel* gave the story a full page, including fifteen photographs.) Los Angeles has no talk-radio station that caters principally to a black audience—no equivalent of New York's WLIB or Chicago's WVON. So the *Sentinel*, though its circulation is under twenty thousand copies a week, is one of the few public voices of the million or so African-Americans who live in Los Angeles County.

That voice has never flagged in support of the man it has called "the handsome and gleaming Simpson." From the beginning, while the mainstream press was using the Simpson case mainly to focus on the issue of domestic violence, the *Sentinel* was presenting the story of a black man searching for justice in a white system. Schatzman's first story on the case, in the issue dated June 16, 1994, set the tone. It began, "Los Angeles police officers first handcuffed, then unhandcuffed, football Hall of Famer O. J. Simpson before whisking him from his Brentwood mansion to police headquarters for questioning." At that point, Simpson had not yet been arrested; that happened after the famous low-speed freeway chase on June 17, 1994. The *Sentinel's* coverage focussed on how and why Simpson had been handcuffed on June 13th. The headline on a front-page sidebar, also by Schatzman, to the main story asked, "WERE THE HANDCUFFS REALLY NECESSARY?" In the breezy style that characterizes many of Schatzman's stories, the sidebar began, "Think hard. How many times did you see convicted cannibal Jeffrey Dahmer handcuffed during his well-publicized arrest and subsequent trial? If

"Hey, buddy, wouldn't the Grand Canal be faster?"

you say 'none' then you get the prize." Schatzman went on to note that a police spokesman never directly answered his questions about why Simpson was cuffed. "So why was he handcuffed?" Schatzman wrote. "Still no satisfactory answer. The black/white double standard just won't go away." And as early as last year Schatzman was asking whether the police and the news media were focussing on Simpson to the exclusion of the real killers. He reported last December that "highly informed sources who walk on Los Angeles' glamorous wild side want to know why there has been no public mention about whether or not two reputed hitmen—whose black Mercedes 500SL was seen parked suspiciously in front of the Mezzaluna Restaurant at approximately 7:45 on the night of June 12—have been questioned by police."

Other black papers quickly picked up the theme of police and media mistreatment of Simpson. In a front-page story with the banner headline "NEWS MEDIA SKILLFULLY PAINTING O. J. SIMPSON AS AN UGLY AMERICAN," the Pittsburgh *Courier* began its report with a paraphrase of Justice Clarence Thomas. The Simpson case, the *Courier* wrote, "is nothing but a modern-day lynching of a Black man." And the *Amsterdam News* concluded its first article on the Simpson case with a quote from Rosa Wilder, a "broker in Los Angeles," who said, "A number of people are saying that O.J. is being framed for this crime. Who is framing him will come out in the investigation."

As the Simpson case has unfolded, the *Sentinel* and other black papers around the country have placed it in the context of the tortured relationship between the Los Angeles Police Department and the city's black residents. "The L.A.P.D.'s reputation is a big part of the story for us," Wilbert Tatum, the publisher and editor-in-chief of the *Amsterdam News*, told me. And Dorothy Leavell, the publisher of the weekly Chicago *Crusader*, said, "Many of us think that there is a conspiracy as far as the police department is concerned, and that has a lot to do with the mistreatment and brutality that blacks have suffered at the hands of the police." Schatzman wrote in his initial story, about the handcuffing, "And, it just didn't happen to O.J.; this is not an isolated incident with prominent black men and local law enforcement." In recent years, taxpayers in Los Angeles have had to pay substantial amounts to settle lawsuits alleging that the L.A.P.D. illegally detained, in separate incidents, the former baseball star Joe Morgan and the track-and-field Olympian Al Joyner. "When O.J. got handcuffed without being charged, that was the thing," Schatzman said. "With the brothers on the corner, the attitude was 'There they go again.' You see, these things happen to us every day." This is not just Schatzman's view. According to the exhaustive report of the Christopher Commission, the independent blue-ribbon panel, chaired by Warren Christopher, that studied the L.A.P.D. in the light of the Rodney King beating, in 1991, "The problem of excessive force is aggravated by racism and bias within the L.A.P.D." The Simpson defense team's conspiracy theory, which posits that Latino drug dealers killed Goldman and Nicole and that police officers planted some of the most incriminating evidence in the case against Simpson, flows directly out of this history. When the defense attorney F. Lee Bailey attempted in his cross-examination to portray Detective Mark Fuhrman as a racist who had planted evidence against Simpson, the *Sentinel's* headline read, "MANY BELIEVE CITY IS RIPE FOR THEORY THAT WHITE COP FRAMED SIMPSON."

For Schatzman, police misconduct is only the most obvious issue illuminated by the Simpson case. It has also provided him with several outlets to express his sardonic reaction to white condescension toward blacks. After jury selection concluded, Schatzman wrote, "Eight African-Americans made the jury cut on the O. J. Simpson case, much to the chagrin of the District Attorney's office. Much of the fault lies in the inattentiveness of many prospective white jurors who were summarily dismissed for not following Superior Court Judge Lance Ito's orders not to watch television or read any newspapers (Charles Murray, author of 'The Bell Curve,' are you reading this?)." And, after the prosecution recounted the many errors made by Dr. Irwin Golden in the autopsies of the victims, Schatzman wrote, "In this age when the trashing of African Americans and their perceived reliance on affirmative action is the topic of state, local and national discussion, many listeners of Chicago's WVON's 'World Prospectives' talk show this week were wondering over the airwaves how did Golden get into the U of I medical school, and more importantly, how did he get out?"

SCHATZMAN'S personal experience with what he calls "the criminal-law system, not the criminal-justice system" does not come only from his days as a judge. He missed a brief period of the Simpson trial in May because he was serving a three-day sentence in jail.

"After I got to L.A., about four years ago, I got a ticket for jaywalking," he explained. "I mean, I'm from the East. I never heard of anyone getting a ticket for jaywalking, but I did. And I was guilty, no question. I even wrote a story about the cop who gave me the ticket, Steven Moody. I called him the best cop in South Central. So, because I never paid, the fine wound up coming to something like three hundred bucks, and I didn't pay it. Eventually, they got a warrant and picked me up and put me in. I worked on my dominoes. I was treated very well. Everybody reads the *Sentinel* in jail." Schatzman insists that he bears the system no ill will for his incarceration, and his passion and outrage about the mistreatment of blacks certainly long predate his stint in jail.

At a recent conference of the ethnic press in Los Angeles, Schatzman spoke movingly about the effect of prejudice in his own life. "Why is it," he asked the group, "that when I get on an elevator every woman grabs her purse tighter? Why when I'm crossing the street do I hear this click-click-click—all the car doors locking around me? Why when I go into a department store am I followed by security?" The audience was full of nods of recognition and more than a few "Amen"s.

But in the question period Schatzman faltered. Granted that the system is racist, one questioner asked, what if Simpson is nevertheless guilty? Speaking, perhaps, for much of black Los Angeles, Schatzman was unwilling to consider the possibility. "You see, what the press is missing is that there were two Cuban hit men seen at Mezzaluna the night of the murders," Schatzman said. "And Cuban hit men are famous for using knives, not guns. They kill with knives, not guns, you see. Knives—they're very skilled." After a brief, uncomfortable silence, the moderator changed the subject. ♦

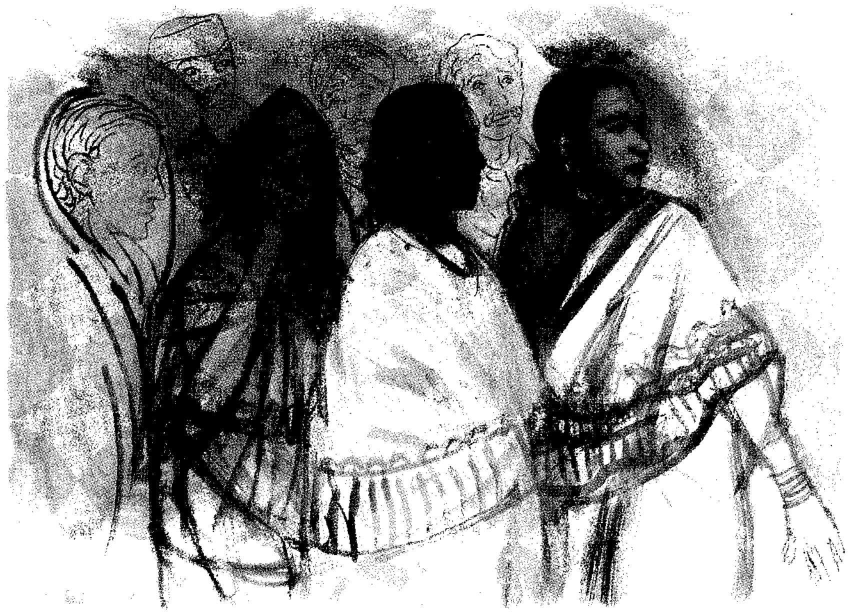
PERSONAL HISTORY

THE GHOSTS OF MRS. GANDHI

In 1984, the author witnessed a moment of disturbing social upheaval. He knew how to respond as a citizen; he is still learning how to respond as a writer.

BY AMITAV GHOSH

NOWHERE else in the world did the year 1984 fulfill its apocalyptic portents as it did in India. Separatist violence in the Punjab; the military attack on the great Sikh temple of Amritsar; the assassination of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi; riots in several cities; the gas disaster in Bhopal—the events followed relentlessly on each other. There were days in 1984 when it took courage to open the New Delhi papers in the morning.



Suddenly, all the women in our group stepped out and surrounded the men: their saris and kameezes became a thin, fluttering barrier, a wall around us.

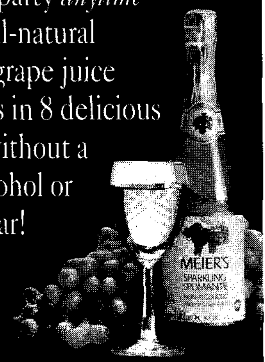
JOHN COLLIER

Of the year's many catastrophes, the sectarian violence following Mrs. Gandhi's death had the greatest effect on my life. Looking back, I see that the experiences of that period were profoundly important to my development as a writer; so much so that I have never attempted to write about them until now.

At the time, I was living in a part of New Delhi called Defence Colony—a neighborhood of large, labyrinthine houses, with little self-contained warrens of servants' rooms tucked away on rooftops and above garages. When I lived there, those rooms had come to house a floating population of the young and straitened—journalists, copywriters, minor executives, and university people like myself. We battened upon this wealthy enclave like mites in a honeycomb, spreading from rooftop to rooftop, our ramshackle lives curtained from our landlords by chiffon-draped washing lines and thickets of TV aerials.

I was twenty-eight. The city I considered home was Calcutta, but New Delhi was where I had spent all my adult life except for a few years away in England and Egypt. I had returned to India two years before, upon completing a doctorate at Oxford, and recently found a teaching job at Delhi University. But it was in the privacy of my baking rooftop hutch that my real life was lived. I was writing my first novel, in the classic fashion, perched in a garret.

On the morning of October 31st, the day of Mrs. Gandhi's death, I caught a bus to Delhi University, as usual, at



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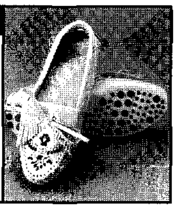

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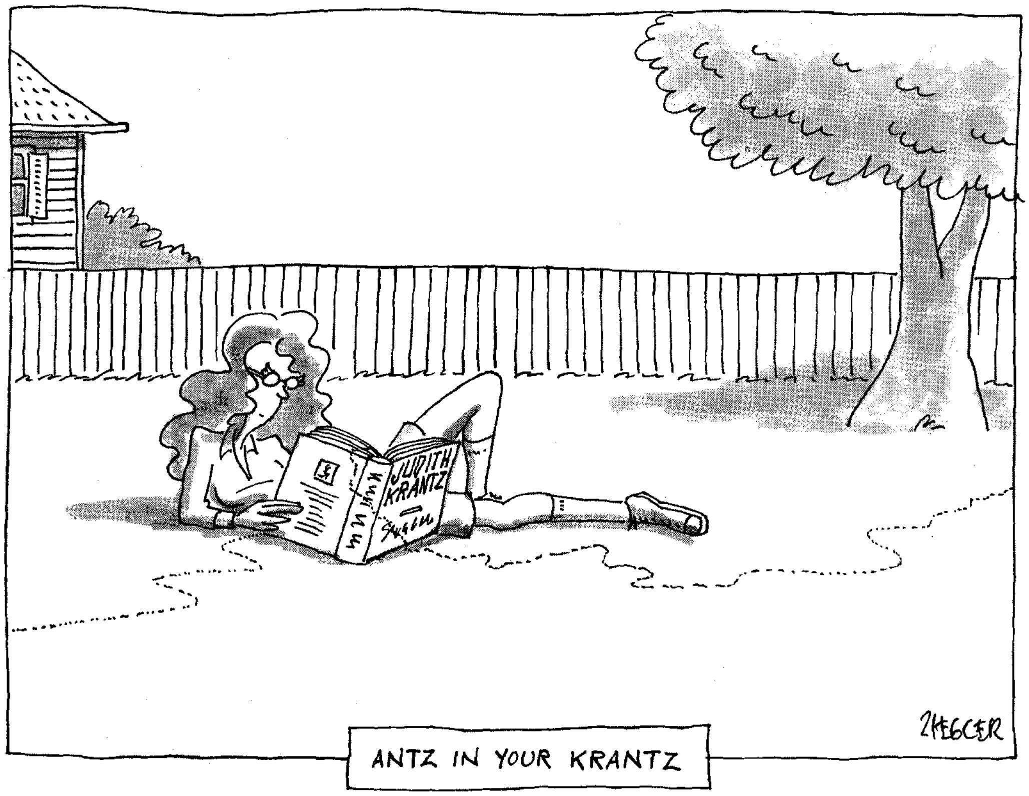


ANTZ IN YOUR KRANTZ

about half past nine. From where I lived, it took an hour and a half: a long commute, but not an exceptional one for New Delhi. The assassination had occurred shortly before, just a few miles away, but I had no knowledge of this when I boarded the bus. Nor did I notice anything untoward at any point during the ninety-minute journey. But the news, travelling by word of mouth, raced my bus to the university.

When I walked into the grounds, I saw not the usual boisterous, Frisbee-throwing crowd of students but small groups of people standing intently around transistor radios. A young man detached himself from one of the huddles and approached me, his mouth twisted into the tight-lipped, knowing smile that seems always to accompany the gambit "Have you heard . . . ?"

The campus was humming, he said. No one knew for sure, but it was being said that Mrs. Gandhi had been shot. The word was that she had been assassinated by two Sikh bodyguards, in revenge for her having sent troops to raid the Sikhs' Golden Temple of Amritsar earlier that year.

Just before stepping into the lecture room, I heard a report on All India Radio, the national network: Mrs. Gandhi had been rushed to hospital after an attempted assassination.

Nothing stopped: the momentum of the daily routine carried things forward. I went into a classroom and began my lecture, but not many students had shown up and those who had were distracted and distant; there was a lot of fidgeting.

Halfway through the class, I looked out through the room's single, slit-like window. The sunlight lay bright on the lawn below and on the trees beyond. It was the time of year when Delhi was at its best, crisp and cool, its abundant greenery freshly watered by the recently retreated monsoons, its skies washed sparkling clean. By the time I turned back, I had forgotten what I was saying and had to reach for my notes.

My unsteadiness surprised me. I was not an uncritical admirer of Mrs. Gandhi. Her brief period of semi-dictatorial rule in the mid-seventies was still alive in my memory. But the ghastliness of her murder was a sudden reminder of the very real qualities that had been taken for granted: her fortitude, her dignity, her physical courage, her endurance.

Yet it was not just grief I felt at that moment. Rather, it was a sense of something slipping loose, of a mooring coming untied somewhere within.

THE first reliable report of Mrs. Gandhi's death was broadcast from Karachi, by Pakistan's official radio network, at around 1:30 P.M. On All India Radio, regular broadcasts had been replaced by music.

I left the university in the late afternoon with a friend, Hari Sen, who lived at the other end of the city. I needed to make a long-distance phone call, and he had offered to let me use his family's telephone.

To get to Hari's house, we had to change buses at Connaught Place, the elegant circular arcade that lies at the geographical heart of Delhi, linking the old city with the new. As the bus swung around the periphery of the arcade, I noticed that the shops, stalls, and eateries were beginning to shut down, even though it was still afternoon.

Our next bus was not quite full, which was unusual. Just as it was pulling out, a man ran out of an office and jumped on. He was middle-aged and dressed in shirt and trousers, evidently an employee in one of the nearby government buildings. He was a Sikh, but I scarcely noticed this at the time.

He probably jumped on without giving the matter any thought, this being his regular, daily bus. But, as it happened, on this day no choice could have been more unfortunate, for the route of the bus went past the hospital where Indira Gandhi's body then lay. Certain loyalists in her party had begun inciting the crowds gathered there to seek revenge. The motorcade of Giani Zail Singh, the President of the Republic, a Sikh, had already been attacked by a mob.

None of this was known to us then, and we would never have suspected it: violence had never been directed at the Sikhs in Delhi.

As the bus made its way down New Delhi's broad, tree-lined avenues, official-looking cars, with outriders and escorts, overtook us, speeding toward the hospital. As we drew nearer, it became evident that a large number of people had gathered there. But this was no ordinary crowd: it seemed to consist mostly of red-eyed young men in half-unbuttoned shirts. It was now that I noticed that my Sikh fellow-passenger was showing signs of increasing anxiety, sometimes standing up to look out, sometimes glancing out the door. It was too late to get off the bus; thugs were everywhere.

The bands of young men grew more and more menacing as we approached the hospital. There was a watchfulness about them; some were armed with steel rods and bicycle chains; others had fanned out across the busy road and were stopping cars and buses.

A stout woman in a sari sitting across the aisle from me was the first to understand what was going on. Rising to her feet, she gestured urgently at the Sikh, who was sitting hunched in his seat. She hissed at him in Hindi, telling him to get down and keep out of sight.

The man started in surprise and squeezed himself into the narrow footspace between the seats. Minutes later, our bus was intercepted by a group of young men dressed in bright, sharp synthetics. Several had bicycle chains wrapped around their wrists. They ran along beside the bus as it slowed to a halt. We heard them call out to the driver through the open door, asking if there were any Sikhs on the bus.

The driver shook his head. No, he said, there were no Sikhs on the bus.

A few rows ahead of me, the crouching, turbaned figure had gone completely still.

Outside, some of the young men were jumping up to look through the windows, asking if there were any Sikhs on the bus. There was no anger in their voices; that was the most chilling thing of all.

No, someone said, and immediately other voices picked up the refrain. Soon all the passengers were shaking their heads and saying, No, no, let us go now, we have to get home.

Eventually, the thugs stepped back and waved us through.

Nobody said a word as we sped away down Ring Road.

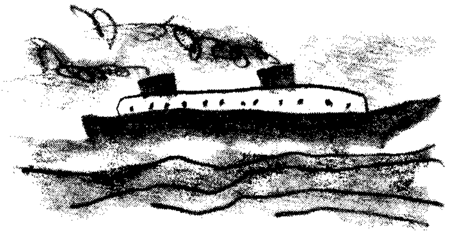
HARI SEN lived in one of New Delhi's recently developed residential colonies. It was called Safdarjang Enclave, and it was neatly and solidly middle-class, a neighborhood of aspirations rather than opulence. Like most such New Delhi suburbs, the area had a mixed population: Sikhs were well represented.

A long street ran from end to end of the neighborhood, like the spine of a comb, with parallel side streets running off it. Hari lived at the end of one of those streets, in a fairly typical, big, one-story bungalow. The house next door, however, was much grander and uncharacteristically daring in design. An angular structure, it was perched rakishly on stilts. Mr. Bawa, the owner, was an elderly Sikh who had spent a long time abroad, working with various international organizations. For several years, he had resided in Southeast Asia; thus the stilts.

Hari lived with his family in a household so large and eccentric that it had come to be known among his friends as Macondo, after Gabriel García Márquez's magical village. On this occasion, however, only his mother and teen-age sister were at home. I decided to stay over.

It was a very bright morning. When I stepped into the sunshine, I came upon a sight that I could never have imagined. In every direction, columns of smoke rose slowly into a limpid sky. Sikh houses and businesses were burning. The fires were so carefully targeted that they created an effect quite different from that of a general conflagration: it was like looking upward into the vault of some vast pillared hall.

The columns of smoke increased in number even as I stood outside watching. Some fires were burning a short distance away. I spoke to a passerby and learned that several nearby Sikh houses had been looted and set on fire that morning. The mob had started at the far end of the colony and was working its way in our direction. Hindus and Muslims who had sheltered or defended Sikhs were also being attacked; their houses, too, were being looted and burned.



It was still and quiet, eerily so. The usual sounds of rush-hour traffic were absent. But every so often we heard a speeding car or a motorcycle on the main street. Later, we discovered that these mysterious speeding vehicles were instrumental in directing the carnage that was taking place. Protected by certain politicians, "organizers" were zooming around the city, assembling "mobs" and transporting them to Sikh-owned houses and shops.

Apparently, the transportation was provided free. A civil-rights report published shortly afterward stated that this phase of the violence "began with the arrival of groups of armed young people in tempo vans, scooters, motorcycles or trucks," and went on to say, "With cans of petrol they went around the localities and systematically set fire to Sikh houses, shops and gurdwaras. . . . The targets were primarily young Sikhs. They were dragged out, beaten up and then burnt alive. . . . In all the affected spots, a calculated attempt to terrorize the people was evident in the common tendency among the assailants to burn alive the Sikhs on public roads."

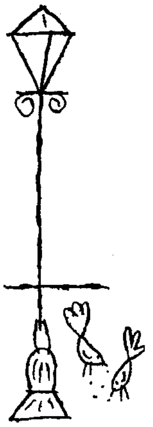
Fire was everywhere; it was the day's motif. Throughout the city, Sikh houses were being looted and then set on fire, often with their occupants still inside.

A survivor—a woman who lost her husband and three sons—offered the following account to Veena Das, a Delhi sociologist: "Some people, the neighbours, one of my relatives, said it would be better if we hid in an abandoned house nearby. So my husband took our three sons and hid there. We locked the house from outside, but there was treachery in people's hearts. Someone must have told the crowd. They baited him to come out. Then they poured kerosene on that house. They burnt them alive. When I went there that night, the bodies of my sons were on the loft—huddled together."

Over the next few days, some twenty-five hundred people died in Delhi alone. Thousands more died in other cities. The total death toll will never be known. The dead were overwhelmingly Sikh men. Entire neighborhoods were gutted; tens of thousands of people were left homeless.

Like many other members of my generation, I grew up believing that mass slaughter of the kind that accompanied the Partition of India and Pakistan, in 1947, could never happen again. But that morning, in the city of Delhi, the violence had reached the same level of intensity.

As Hari and I stood staring into the smoke-streaked sky, Mrs. Sen, Hari's mother, was thinking of matters closer at hand. She was about fifty, a tall, graceful woman with a gentle, soft-spoken manner. In an understated way, she was also deeply religious, a devout Hindu. When she heard what was happening, she picked up the phone and called Mr. and Mrs. Bawa, the elderly Sikh couple next door, to let them know that they were welcome to come over. She met with an unexpected response: an awkward silence. Mrs. Bawa thought she was joking, and wasn't sure whether to be amused or not.



Toward midday, Mrs. Sen received a phone call: the mob was now in the immediate neighborhood, advancing systematically from street to street. Hari decided that it was time to go over and have a talk with the Bawas. I went along.

Mr. Bawa proved to be a small, slight man. Although he was casually dressed, his turban was neatly tied and his beard was carefully combed and bound. He was puzzled by our visit. After a polite greeting, he asked what he could do for us. It fell to Hari to explain.

Mr. Bawa had heard about Indira Gandhi's assassination, of course, and he knew that there had been some trouble. But he could not understand why these "disturbances" should impinge on him or his wife. He had no more sympathy for the Sikh terrorists than we did; his revulsion at the assassination was, if anything, even greater than ours. Not only was his commitment to India and the Indian state absolute but it was evident from his bearing that he belonged to the country's ruling élite.

How do you explain to someone who has spent a lifetime cocooned in privilege that a potentially terminal rent has appeared in the wrappings? We found ourselves faltering. Mr. Bawa could not bring himself to believe that a mob might attack him.

By the time we left, it was Mr. Bawa who was mouthing reassurances. He sent us off with jovial pats on our backs. He did not actually say "Buck up," but his manner said it for him.

We were confident that the government would soon act to stop the violence. In India, there is a drill associated with civil disturbances: a curfew is declared; paramilitary units are deployed; in extreme cases, the Army marches to the stricken areas. No city in India is better equipped to perform this drill than New Delhi, with its huge security apparatus. We later learned that in some cities—Calcutta, for example—the state authorities did act promptly to prevent violence. But in New Delhi—and in much of northern India—hour followed hour without a response. Every few minutes, we turned to the radio, hoping to hear that the Army had been ordered out. All we heard was mournful music and descriptions of Mrs. Gandhi's lying in state; of the comings and goings of dignitaries, foreign and national. The bulletins could have been messages from another planet.

As the afternoon progressed, we continued to hear reports of the mob's steady advance. Before long, it had reached the next alley; we could hear the voices; the smoke was everywhere. There was still no sign of the Army or the police.

Hari again called Mr. Bawa, and now, with the flames visible from his windows, he was more receptive. He agreed to come over with his wife, just for a short while. But there was a problem: How? The two properties were separated by a shoulder-high wall, so it was impossible to walk from one house to the other except along the street.

I spotted a few of the thugs already at the end of the street. We could hear the occasional motorcycle, cruising slowly up and down. The Bawas could not risk stepping out into the street. They would be seen: the sun had dipped low in the sky, but it was still light. Mr. Bawa balked at the thought of climbing over the wall: it seemed an insuperable obstacle at his age. But eventually Hari persuaded him to try.

We went to wait for them at the back of the Sens' house—in a spot that was well sheltered from the street. The mob seemed terrifyingly close, the Bawas reckless in their tardiness. A long time passed before the elderly couple finally appeared, hurrying toward us.

Mr. Bawa had changed before leaving the house: he was neatly dressed, dapper, even—in blazer and cravat. Mrs. Bawa, a small, matronly woman, was dressed in a *salwar* and *kameez*. Their cook was with them, and it was with his assistance that they made it over the wall. The cook, who was Hindu, then returned to the house to stand guard.

Hari led the Bawas into the drawing room, where Mrs. Sen was waiting, dressed in a chiffon sari. The room was large and well appointed, its walls hung with a rare and beautiful set of miniatures. With the curtains now drawn and the lamps lit, it was warm and welcoming. But all that lay between us and the mob in the street was a row of curtained French windows and a garden wall.

Mrs. Sen greeted the elderly couple with folded hands as they came in. The three seated themselves in an intimate circle, and soon a silver tea tray appeared. Instantly, all constraint evaporated, and, to the tinkling of porcelain, the conversation turned to the staples of New Delhi drawing-room chatter.

I could not bring myself to sit down. I stood in the corridor, distracted, looking outside through the front entrance.

A couple of scouts on motorcycles had drawn up next door. They had dismounted and were inspecting the house, walking in among the concrete stilts, looking up into the house. Somehow, they got wind of the cook's presence and called him out.

The cook was very frightened. He was surrounded by thugs thrusting knives in his face and shouting questions. It was dark, and some were carrying kerosene torches. Wasn't it true, they shouted, that his employers were Sikhs? Where were they? Were they hiding inside? Who owned the house—Hindus or Sikhs?

Hari and I hid behind the wall between the two houses and listened to the interrogation. Our fates depended on this lone, frightened man. We had no idea what he would do: of how secure the Bawas were of his loyalties, or whether he might seek revenge for some past slight by revealing their whereabouts. If he did, both houses would burn.

Although stuttering in terror, the cook held his own. Yes, he said, yes, his employers were Sikhs, but they'd left town; there was no one in the house. No, the house didn't belong to them; they were renting from a Hindu.

He succeeded in persuading most of the thugs, but a few eyed the surrounding houses suspiciously. Some appeared at the steel gates in front of us, rattling the bars.

We went up and positioned ourselves at the gates. I remember a strange sense of disconnection as I walked down the driveway, as though I were watching myself from somewhere very distant.

We took hold of the gates and shouted back: Get away! You have no business here! There's no one inside! The house is empty!

To our surprise, they began to drift away, one by one.

Just before this, I had stepped into the house to see how Mrs. Sen and the Bawas were faring. The thugs were clearly audible in the lamplit drawing room; only a thin curtain shielded the interior from their view.

My memory of what I saw in the drawing room is uncannily vivid. Mrs. Sen had a slight smile on her face as she poured a cup of tea for Mr. Bawa. Beside her, Mrs. Bawa, in a firm, unwavering voice, was comparing the domestic-help situations in New Delhi and Manila.

I was awed by their courage.

THE next morning, I heard about a protest that was being organized at the large compound of a relief agency. When I arrived, a meeting was already under way, a gathering of seventy or eighty people.

The mood was sombre. Some of the people spoke of neighborhoods that had been taken over by vengeful mobs. They described countless murders—mainly by setting the victims alight—as well as terrible destruction: the burning of Sikh temples, the looting of Sikh schools, the razing of Sikh homes and shops. The violence was worse than I had imagined. It was decided that the most effective initial tactic would be to march into one of the badly affected neighborhoods and confront the rioters directly.

The group had grown to about a hundred and fifty men and women, among them Swami Agnivesh, a Hindu ascetic; Ravi Chopra, a scientist and environmentalist; and a handful of opposition politicians, including Chandra Shekhar, who became Prime Minister for a brief period several years later.

The group was pitifully small by the standards of a city where crowds of several hundred thousand were routinely mustered for political rallies. Nevertheless, the members rose to their feet and began to march.

Years before, I had read a passage by V. S. Naipaul which has stayed with me ever since. I have never been able to find it again, so this account is from memory. In his incomparable prose Naipaul describes a demonstration. He is in a hotel room, somewhere in Africa or South America; he looks down and sees people marching past. To his surprise, the sight fills him with an obscure longing, a kind of melancholy; he is aware of a wish to go out, to join, to merge his concerns with theirs. Yet he knows he never will; it is simply not in his nature to join crowds.

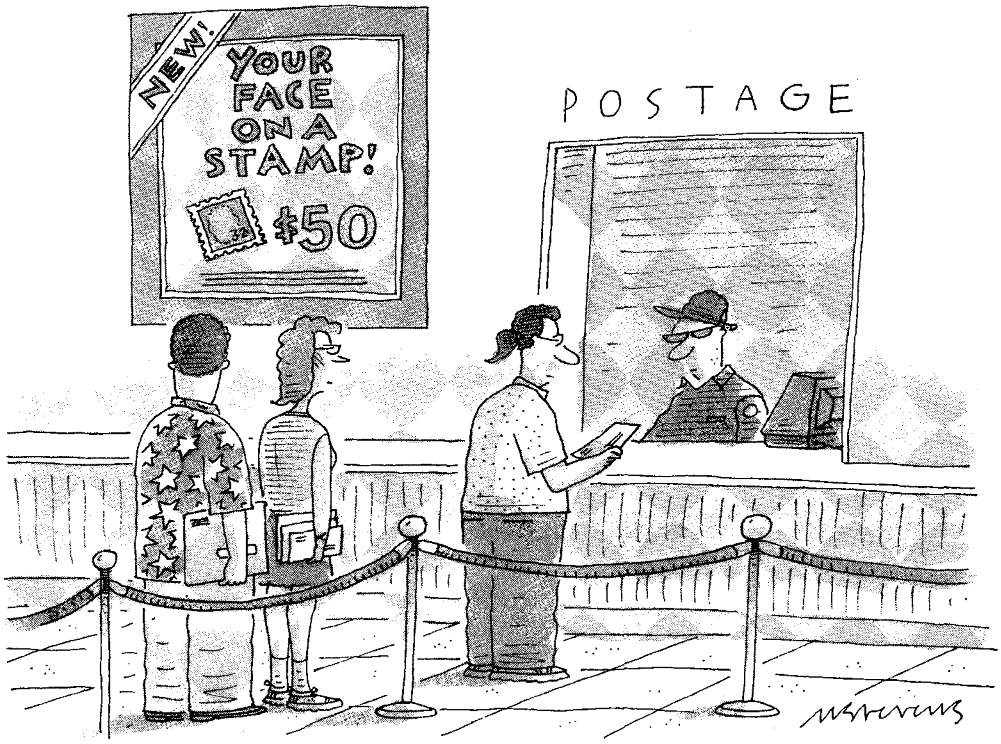
For many years, I read everything of Naipaul's I could lay my hands on; I couldn't have enough of him. I read him with the intimate, appalled attention that one reserves for one's most skillful interlocutors. It was he who first made it possible for me to think of myself as a writer, working in English.

I remembered that passage because I believed that I, too, was not a joiner, and in Naipaul's pitiless mirror I thought I had seen an aspect of myself rendered visible. Yet as this forlorn little group marched out of the shelter of the compound I did not hesitate for a moment: without a second thought, I joined.

The march headed first for Lajpat Nagar, a busy commercial area a mile or so away. I knew the area. Though it was in New Delhi, its streets resembled the older parts of the city, where small, cramped shops tended to spill out onto the footpaths.

We were shouting slogans as we marched: hoary Gandhian staples of peace and brotherhood from half a century before. Then, suddenly, we were confronted with a starkly familiar spectacle, an image of twentieth-century urban horror: burned-out cars, their ransacked interiors visible through smashed windows; debris and rubble everywhere. Blackened pots had been strewn along the street. A cinema had been gutted, and the charred faces of film stars stared out at us from half-burned posters.

As I think back to that march, my memory breaks down, details dissolve. I recently telephoned some friends who



had been there. Their memories are similar to mine in only one respect: they, too, clung to one scene while successfully ridding their minds of the rest.

The scene my memory preserved is of a moment when it seemed inevitable that we would be attacked.

Rounding a corner, we found ourselves facing a crowd that was larger and more determined-looking than any other crowds we had encountered. On each previous occasion, we had prevailed by marching at the thugs and engaging them directly, in dialogues that turned quickly into extended shouting matches. In every instance, we had succeeded in facing them down. But this particular mob was intent on confrontation. As its members advanced on us, brandishing knives and steel rods, we stopped. Our voices grew louder as they came toward us; a kind of rapture descended on us, exhilaration in anticipation of a climax. We braced for the attack, leaning forward as though into a wind.

And then something happened that I have never completely understood. Nothing was said; there was no signal, nor was there any break in the rhythm of our chanting. But suddenly all the women in our group—and the women made up more than half of the group's numbers—stepped out and surrounded the men; their saris and *kameezes* became a thin, fluttering barrier, a wall around us. They turned to face the approaching men, challenging them, daring them to attack.

The thugs took a few more steps toward us and then faltered, confused. A moment later, they were gone.

THE march ended at the walled compound where it had started. In the next couple of hours, an organization was created, the Nagarik Ekta Manch, or Citizens' Unity Front, and its work—to bring relief to the injured and the bereft, to shelter the homeless—began the next morning. Food and clothing were needed, and camps had to be established to accommodate the thousands of people with nowhere to sleep. And by the next day we were overwhelmed—literally. The large compound was crowded with vanloads of blankets, secondhand clothing, shoes, and sacks of flour, sugar, and tea. Previously hard-nosed, unsentimental businessmen sent cars and trucks. There was barely room to move.

My own role in the Front was slight. For a few weeks, I worked with a team from Delhi University, distributing supplies in the slums and working-class neighborhoods that had been worst hit by the rioting. Then I returned to my desk.

In time, inevitably, most of the Front's volunteers returned to their everyday lives. But some members—most notably the women involved in the running of refugee camps—continued to work for years afterward with Sikh women and children who had been rendered homeless. Jaya Jaitley, Lalita Ramdas, Veena Das, Mita Bose, Radha Kumar: these women, each one an accomplished professional, gave up years of their time to repair the enormous damage that had been done in a matter of two or three days.

The Front also formed a team to investigate the riots. I briefly considered joining, but then decided that an investigation would be a waste of time because the politicians capable of inciting violence were unlikely to heed a tiny group of concerned citizens.

I was wrong. A document eventually produced by this team—a slim pamphlet entitled "Who Are the Guilty?"—has become a classic, a searing indictment of the politicians who encouraged the riots and the police who allowed the rioters to have their way.

Over the years the Indian government has compensated some of the survivors of the 1984 violence and resettled some of the homeless. One gap remains: to this day, no instigator of the riots has been charged. But the pressure on the government has never gone away, and it continues to grow: every year, the nails hammered in by that slim document dig just a little deeper.

That pamphlet and others that followed are testaments to the only humane possibility available to people who live in multiethnic, multireligious societies like those of the Indian subcontinent. Human-rights documents such as "Who Are the Guilty?" are essential to the process of broadening civil institutions: they are the weapons with which society asserts itself against a state that runs criminally amok, as this one did in Delhi in November of 1984.

It is heartening that sanity prevails today in the Punjab. But not elsewhere. In Bombay, local government officials want to stop any public buildings from being painted green—a color associated with the Muslim religion. And hundreds of Muslims have been deported from the city's slums—in at least one case for committing an offense no graver than reading a Bengali newspaper. It is imperative that governments insure that those who instigate mass violence do not go unpunished.

THE Bosnian writer Dzevad Karahasan, in a remarkable essay called "Literature and War" (published last year in his collection "Sarajevo, Exodus of a City"), makes a startling connection between modern literary aestheticism and the contemporary world's indifference to violence: "The decision to perceive literally everything as an aesthetic phenomenon—completely sidestepping questions about goodness and truth—is an artistic decision. That decision started in the realm of art, and went on to become characteristic of the contemporary world."

When I went back to my desk in November of 1984, I found myself confronting decisions about writing that I had never faced before. How was I to write about what I had seen without reducing it to mere spectacle? My next novel was bound to be influenced by my experiences, but I could see no way of writing directly about those events without re-creating them as a panorama of violence—"an aesthetic phenomenon," as Karahasan was to call it. At the time, the idea seemed obscene and futile; of much greater importance were factual reports of the testimony of the victims. But these were already being done by people who were, I knew, more competent than I could be.

Within a few months, I started my novel, which I eventually called "The Shadow Lines"—a book that led me backward in time, to earlier memories of riots, ones witnessed in childhood. It became a book not about any one event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them.

And until now I have never really written about what I saw in November of 1984. I am not alone: several others who took part in that march went on to publish books, yet nobody, so far as I know, has ever written about it except in passing.

There are good reasons for this, not least the politics of the situation, which leave so little room for the writer. The riots were generated by a cycle of violence, involving the terrorists in the Punjab, on the one hand, and the Indian government, on the other. To write carelessly, in such a way as to appear to endorse terrorism or repression, can add easily to the problem: in such incendiary circumstances, words cost lives, and it is only appropriate that those who deal in words should pay scrupulous attention to what they say. It is only appropriate that they should find themselves inhibited.

But there is also a simpler explanation. Before I could set down a word, I had to resolve a dilemma, between being a writer and being a citizen. As a writer, I had only one obvious subject: the violence. From the news report, or the latest film or novel, we have come to expect the bloody detail or the elegantly staged conflagration that closes a chapter or effects a climax. But it is worth asking if the very obviousness of this subject arises out of our modern conventions of representation; within the dominant aesthetic of our time—the aesthetic of what Karahasan calls "indifference"—it is all too easy to present violence as an apocalyptic spectacle, while the resistance to it can as easily figure as mere sentimentality, or, worse, as pathetic or absurd.

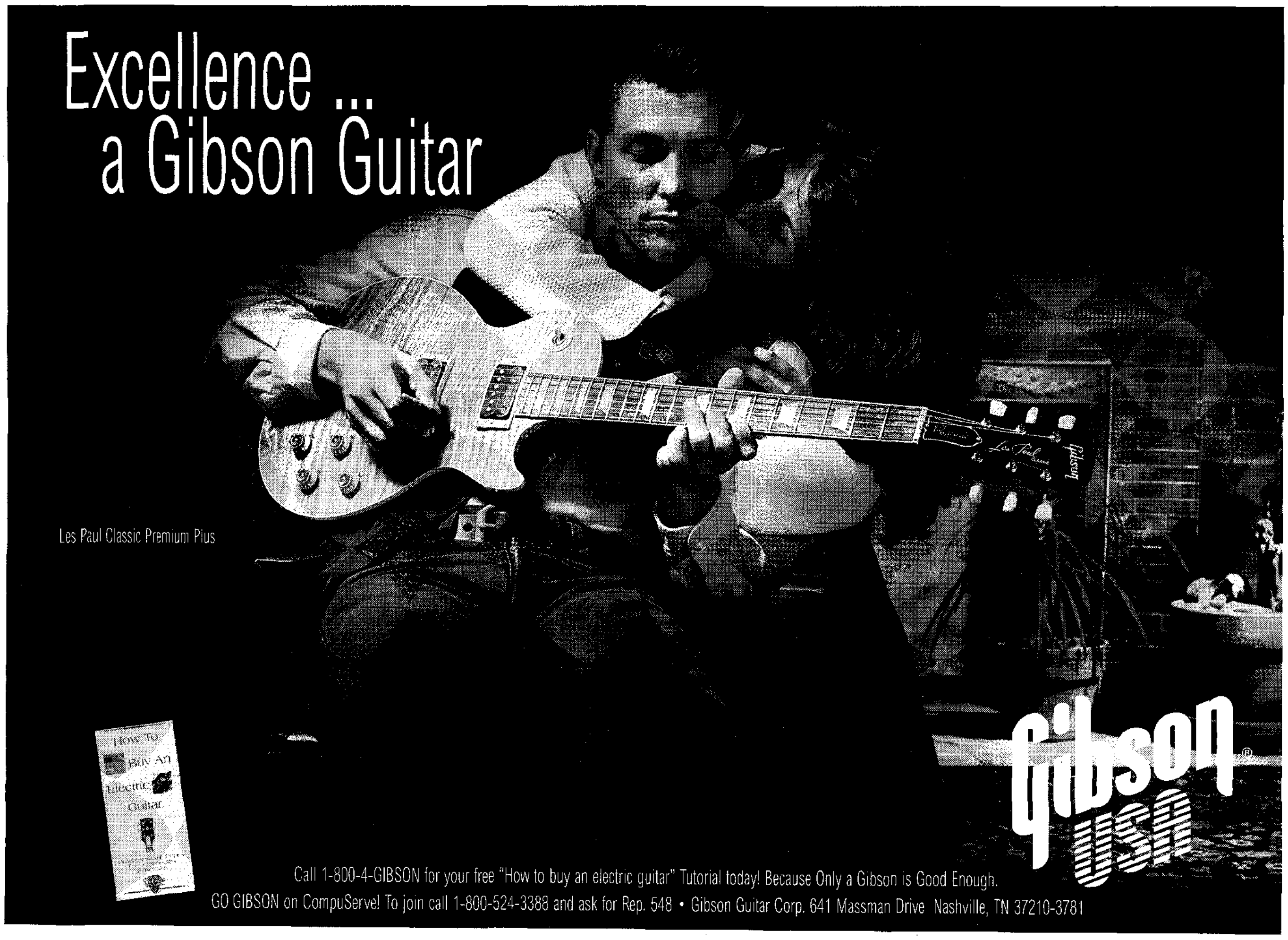
Writers don't join crowds—Naipaul and so many others teach us that. But what do you do when the constitutional authority fails to act? You join and in joining bear all the responsibilities and obligations and guilt that joining represents. My experience of the violence was overwhelmingly and memorably of the resistance to it. When I think of the women staring down the mob, I am not filled with a writerly wonder. I am reminded of my gratitude for being saved from injury. What I saw at first hand—and not merely on that march but on the bus, in Hari's house, in the huge compound that filled with essential goods—was not the horror of violence but the affirmation of humanity: in each case, I witnessed the risks that perfectly ordinary people were willing to take for one another.

When I now read descriptions of troubled parts of the world, in which violence appears primordial and inevitable, a fate to which masses of people are largely resigned, I find myself asking, Is that all there was to it? Or is it possible that the authors of these descriptions failed to find a form—or a style or a voice or a plot—that could accommodate both violence *and* the civilized, willed response to it?

The truth is that the commonest response to violence is one of repugnance, and that a significant number of people everywhere try to oppose it in whatever ways they can. That these efforts so rarely appear in accounts of violence is not surprising: they are too undramatic. For those who participate in them, they are often hard to write about for the very reasons that so long delayed my own account of 1984.

"Let us not fool ourselves," Karahasan writes. "The world is written first—the holy books say that it was created in words—and all that happens in it, happens in language first."

It is when we think of the world the aesthetic of indifference might bring into being that we recognize the urgency of remembering the stories we have not written. ♦



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PROFILE

DEALING WITH ROSEANNE

Media fascination with Roseanne's outrageous private life has obscured her real importance in America's comedic tradition: the essence of her art and how she used it to make rage about sex and class funny.

BY JOHN LAHR

Once upon a time, in 1985, Johnny Carson introduced the freshest new comic voice on the Los Angeles comedy-club scene, a thirty-two-year-old Denver housewife, to his "Tonight Show" audience. Backstage, before going on, the comedienne opened a letter she'd written to herself years before, when she'd imagined this moment of triumph. Part of it said, "This is the beginning of your life, for She who is and is not yet." Then Carson said "Please welcome Roseanne Barr!" and the nation took its first look at the radical feminist disguised as a faux naïf who would become an iconoclast the like of which had never been seen before on TV. She was a bulky five feet four, in flats and black slacks, with a gardenia corsage pinned to her black-and-orange jacket. She chewed gum as she smiled. She gave a girlish little wave of her left hand, and in a voice as affectless as her salute said, "Oh, hi. I been married thirteen years, and lemme tell you, it's a thrill to be out of the house. I never get out of the house. I stay home all the time. I never do anything fun 'cause I'm a housewife. I hate the word 'housewife.' I prefer to be called 'domestic goddess.' "

The laughs during her monologue were often longer than the jokes. "Do you guys like that guy Stephen King that writes those really scary books?" she asked the audience. "Well, now he has come out with the scariest book he ever, ever wrote. It is *so* scary. It's about a husband with a mind of his own." On video, the audience's shock is audible: there is a gasp, then applause, then cheering. Roseanne laughs along with the viewers. "Oh, don't get tense, ladies. It's just a fantasy. It could never really happen." It had taken Roseanne five years to perfect the six minutes of material and the ungrammatical jazz of her delivery, which steered her début expertly to its final punch. "Still, stuff bugs me," she said. "This bugs me the worst. That's when the husband thinks that the wife knows where everything is, huh? Like they think the uterus is a tracking device. He comes in: 'Hey, Roseanne! Roseanne! Do we have any Cheetos left?' Like he can't go over and lift up that sofa cushion himself."

From that moment, Roseanne was out of the house and into the fantasy life of the nation; her very presence was a provocation. Her body (she sometimes tipped the scales at more than two hundred pounds) and her unladylike talk made her America's bourgeois nightmare come to comic life. "Roseanne," the show she minted from the strong, bright part of her splintered personality, has been beamed around the world on prime-time television since 1988 and is going into its eighth—and probably final—year. The onetime waitress, who was working for a dollar and a half an hour plus tips in Denver when she began doing her standup act, now earns a little more than a million dollars for each of the twenty-five episodes she does in a season. Her production company, Full Moon & High Tide, negotiated a deal with ABC to produce up to four series. Roseanne figures that by the end of the century she should be worth around a billion dollars. On being asked in public recently about her stature as the most powerful woman in American entertainment, Roseanne feigned modesty and said, "What about Oprah?" In private, though, during a week I spent with her

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

The Domestic Goddess. Her message is: If you can't stand the heat, stay out of her face.

in L.A. this spring, Roseanne contended, "I'm way more up there than Oprah. I have commitments for solid pay-or-play series; and nobody—no man or woman—has that. Just me." Roseanne also has a screenwriting deal with Miramax. She won the fierce competition for the rights to co-produce (with Warner Bros.) an American version of Jennifer Saunders' hugely successful British sitcom "Absolutely Fabulous." She is refining contract arrangements to co-produce "Planet Hollywood Squares," a weekly version of the famous quiz show, and a late-night comedy show. And within three years Roseanne's Big Food Diner, which she started in Eldon, Iowa, during her interlude with husband No. 2, the comedian Tom Arnold, will be expanded to a string of diners across America. (They will feature "the real food that everybody likes," from her own calorie-crammed recipes.) Finally, Roseanne is planning to start a line of clothing for large women and has already made some of the designs. "Very simple and tailored things," she says. "No big swans and shit like that on them."

Commercial success has allowed Roseanne to win for herself, her comedy, and her feminist agenda what had previously been allowed only to a handful of great American funnymen, such as Charlie Chaplin and Woody Allen: the control of her product. Most comedians are hostile sharpshooters loudly proclaiming their innocence, but Roseanne has got where she is by biting the hands that have fed her—family, feminism, and Hollywood. She simply can't see a boundary without crossing it. Her divorces, her disputed history as an abused child, her public excesses—what she calls those "Prozac moments," as when she botched the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" at a baseball game—have fed the tabloids and sometimes obscured her gift. Roseanne has the rare markings of a true renegade comic spirit. Recently, two months before her third marriage—to her twenty-eight-year-old bodyguard/driver, Ben Thomas—she showed off the scar of her in-vitro pregnancy on the David Letterman show. The scar made news; but, in a way, the gesture was much more than a prank. The comic's job is to bare wounds to a world that won't admit its own. "The hollow and full run together," Roseanne has written of her paradoxical nature; and the genuine zany has no choice but to express this dividedness as a way of mastering it. "I am an overweight overachiever with a few dandy compulsive-obsessive disorders and a little problem with self-mutilation," she writes in a 1994 autobiography, "My Lives." "Like vampires and night creatures, we wander the earth, alone, haunted, not owning a body, just temporarily inhabiting one. Crazy all the way."

Roseanne holds nothing back: whatever emotion overtakes her, she expresses. "I'm pure id," she says. When *TV Guide* said that the current season of "Roseanne" lacked "the touch of Tom Arnold" (Arnold had been the show's co-executive producer), Roseanne called up the "Tonight Show" and got Jay Leno to cut his monologue short so she could rebut the remarks. "I've had the Tom Arnold touch, and, let me tell you, what he lacked in size he made up for in speed," she told the nation. To the charge of falling ratings, she fumed, "Did it ever occur to anybody that it was simply because of complications with my in-vitro fertilization and doctors ordering me to lay on my back for twelve weeks of my pregnancy and that during those times *I wasn't even on the show*?" Roseanne was in fine and fearless fury. "O.K., well I think what they're really mad about is that I'm a woman calling the shots; and that I was a waitress; and that I was a maid; and I never went past the ninth grade, and I *still* do a better show than any of them. And I just want to say now I'm back in full force and I've even fired the head writer who in my absence let my show go to hell. And it felt so great to fire yet another overpaid, undertalented man that the press cannot wait to give credit for *my* work. So in conclusion I would like to say that anybody who has a problem with that can kiss my ass!" At this point, Leno tried politely to approach Roseanne and segue into the next part of the show. "I'm not done! I'm not done!" she said, pushing him away and turning back to Mr. and Mrs. America. "And after that," she said, "they can kiss my baby's ass, too!" It was great television, and an exemplary lesson in Roseanne's roaring high dudgeon: If you can't stand the heat, stay out of her face.

Rage is Roseanne's ozone. She exudes it. She creates it. "It isn't a choice," Roseanne says. "You don't decide 'I'm going to be offensive or do something that upsets people.' It just happens." When Roseanne addressed the National Association of College Broadcasters not long ago, she began by saying, "Some of you have absolutely no talent and don't know what you're doing at all, have no point of view, and don't care. I predict that you're the ones who will be successful." The broadcasting wanna-bes laughed. Roseanne, as usual, was making the unacceptable irresistible. Because of the sexual politics of previous eras, the comediennes to whom Roseanne sees herself linked—Mae West, Judy Holliday, Lucille Ball—got their way by cunning indirection. But Roseanne prefers the head butt to the bon mot. She can rumble. Matt Berry, a standup comedian who performed with Roseanne in the Denver clubs and now works as a writer on her show, remembers the time that fifty bikers and their girlfriends came to a gig. "She used to have a line in her act where she goes, 'I really hate bikers. You know, they all got tobacco juice in their beards. They piss on the side of the road. And the men are even worse!' " he says. "She walks out. Sees all these bikers. Big, burly guys. She looks at the comics in the back. 'Should I do it?' We're yelling, 'Do it!' She did it. They fuckin' loved her. They went nuts."

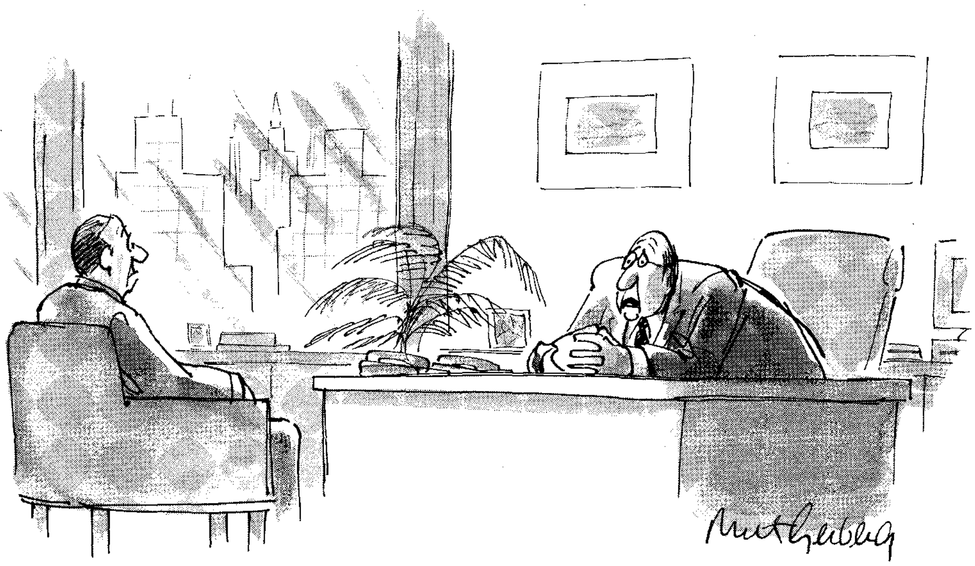
Roseanne has reclaimed for female comedy the phallic aggression which is traditionally associated with male humor, whose totem, the Fool's sceptre, is actually the penis. Even Roseanne's physical posture—she has discarded the apologetic feminine stance onstage, and plants her feet firmly apart—suggests phallic power, which is, she insists, "really womb power that men stole." "A man standing with his legs apart is impersonating a woman," Roseanne explains, assuming the erect birth posture. "Men all have womb envy. We don't have penis envy." She goes on, "My psychic penis is way larger than any man's. My attitude is, I have a vagina and therefore I have the bigger penis." Roseanne stated her position most succinctly in her rough-and-tumble standup days, when, she says, "I was the filthiest act ever. I would do anything." She'd end her set by saying, "People say to me, 'You're not very feminine.' Well, they can *suck my dick*."

IN her comedy, Roseanne is unrelenting, which translates in psychological terms as inconsolable. Laughter is her revenge on a childhood she characterizes as a "roiling nightmare of Dickensian struggle." Roseanne was born in 1952, into a poor Jewish family living among Mormons in Salt Lake City. She remembers praying "either make me retarded or make me a Mormon," and explains, "They all seemed so happy; they didn't see the ugliness I did." Roseanne's grandmother Bobbe Mary lost all her relatives in the Nazi concentration camps, and ran an apartment house for survivors of the Holocaust; Roseanne remembers that her mother, who was born in Utah, lived in constant fear of being exterminated. "Her hobbies," Roseanne writes, "were being a credit to her race and hiding in the basement." This is not comic hyperbole. "Our mother would say, 'They'll come for us,' " Roseanne says. "I remember her taking us down to the basement if someone just came and knocked on the door. I really, truly believed that if anybody found out we were Jewish they would kill us." But, she says, "I knew Jews were allowed to live safely in New York." This knowledge came from "The Ed Sullivan Show" and the Jewish comedians on it. "It was like Radio Free America," she says. "I loved them all—Totie Fields, Jack Carter, Buddy Hackett. But the comedian who really moved me was Richard Pryor. I knew that he was inside the stereotype and fighting against it, that he was going to blow it up from the inside. I got that immediately. I thought, By God, I'm going to do the same thing being a woman."

All the oppression and self-loathing that male authority perpetrates against women seem to have coalesced, one way or another, in her. She claims to have twenty-one separate personalities, and four years ago went public with the accusation that her parents abused her (which they deny). According to family lore, as an infant Roseanne screamed so frantically and jammed her fist in her mouth so consistently that she rubbed the skin off her nose and had to be put in a tiny restraining jacket. At sixteen, after she was hit by a car (her head was impaled on the hood ornament), she was institutionalized for a year, and when she got out she often had a recurring nightmare that she could not wake up. "I was horrified that people would think I was dead and bury me alive," Roseanne says. She also turned her fury recklessly on herself—cutting herself, burning herself, and abusing her body by alternately starving and gorging it. Nonetheless, in the midst of a chaotic family atmosphere Roseanne learned that the way to survive was to be fierce and funny. Her father, whom she characterizes in her books as a bully and a slob, had grown up wanting to be a comedian. "So I just kind of grew a part of me that was very aggressive in a comedic way," Roseanne says. "Because if I was to dare to be aggressive and it wasn't funny, I would be hurt badly. But if it was funny he would laugh. It was really weird." Laughter became both a seduction and a defense—a way for Roseanne to call attention to herself and to create a buffer of space around herself. "He taught me that comedy was mightier than the pen *and* the sword," Roseanne says. "We would always have contests, showdowns, and I would always win. Even if it was anti-male, anti-him, he would say, 'Good one.' "

Roseanne to her "Absolutely Fabulous" writers: "Send me stuff that just shocks me and scares me every single day."

In 1971, when she was eighteen, Roseanne had an illegitimate daughter, Brandi ("My father spat at me; he *spat*



“Why no raise? Because, Fellman, we’ve been fiscally feckless.”

• •

at me!”), whom she gave up for adoption and with whom she was reunited a few years ago. (Brandi now works on Roseanne’s show.) That same year, Roseanne left home and met her first husband, Bill Pentland, who was a motel night clerk in Georgetown, Colorado, where Roseanne was prep cooking and washing dishes in a restaurant. By the time she was twenty-six she was caring for three children under the age of four (Jessica, 1975; Jennifer, 1976; and Jake, 1978) in a house that occupied six hundred square feet. As she later joked, “I breed well in captivity.”

In reality, she didn’t. She worked variously as a window dresser, a maid, a waitress, and a prostitute, and gradually began to write comedy. Roseanne calls her emergence a “slow dawning.” “I aspired to be Gertrude Stein, or Dylan Thomas, or some poetess tragically and forlornly trying to scrape some piece of misery off the sole of my soul and write some touching little fat girl shit about it,” she wrote in her first book, “Roseanne: My Life as a Woman” (1989), “until . . . I heard Lord Buckley, and Lenny Bruce, and understood the jazz of words alone.” In 1980, when Roseanne went to work as a cocktail waitress at Bennigan’s, which became known to the regulars as Rosie’s, she found her arena. “I’d go, ‘That’s six bucks for the drinks, another three bucks for me to take them off the tray and give them to ya,’ ” she says. “I’d shortchange ’em. Eat food off their plates. They always laughed. This one guy goes, ‘Well, Roseanne, do you know anybody that is married and does not want to get divorced and wants to fool around with somebody else who is married, who has a lot of money, who likes to have a lot of sex and be taken care of?’ And I go, ‘Well, yeah. Your wife.’ ” At Bennigan’s, Roseanne “felt like a star”; and, more important, she was at liberty. From eight at night to two in the morning, she worked the room, fending off the male come-ons with “the meanest comebacks imaginable.” It was at Bennigan’s that Roseanne first learned of the Comedy Works, a club where aspiring comics could test their material. “That’s when it hit me that the place was invented only for me to go and do it,” she says. “I always knew. Totally always. That I was gonna be a comic and I was gonna have my own show and I was gonna be as rich as Bill Cosby.” To Pentland (who is now on good terms with Roseanne; last year he had a walk-on part in her show), Roseanne’s almost messianic sense of her calling was “like somebody saying they’re gonna win the lottery.” He made her a mike stand from a screwdriver and a broom handle so she could practice her delivery in their living room; but he was skeptical. “I was happy to see her get a hobby that fulfilled her,” he says. “My sense of it at that time was that Roseanne wanted to be more than a performer—she wanted to be a political voice.”

As Roseanne writes, “I began to tell the truth about my life—because I couldn’t tell the truth off the stage. And very quickly, the world began to blow apart.” The first time Roseanne went onstage and pronounced her rebellion—what she calls “a huge, cosmic ‘NO’ ”—she felt “chilled and free and redeemed. I had decided to Stand Up.” Roseanne took her newfound freedom to the outer limits. She had one gig as an m.c. at a strip club. “I had a woman partner,” Roseanne says, speaking of a cohort named Susan Bublitz. “Me and her would go on there and of course we’d see the strippers downstairs afterwards. I swear one had a flattop under her wig. Puts on muscle shirt, sweatpants, Nikes. A butch cat. Me and Susan were onstage one night. I thought it was hilarious. I go, ‘We’d like to do our impressions of the strippers for ya.’ All these drunk fuckers are goin’ ‘Take it off!’ So we start makin’ out. And I go, ‘Don’t you know these women are fuckin’ dykes, and they *hate* you?’ On Friday and Saturday nights at midnight, they made me and Susan eat bananas. Then they’d have the guys in the audience vote on which one of us was the winner. I’d just take the banana, peel it, and eat it. Susan’d be like—I’d watch her—doing the whole thing. She won every night. And I’d go, ‘Fuck you. *I* swallowed!’ ”

Roseanne had also begun working at the radical Woman to Woman bookstore (where, she says, she kept men out with a baseball bat), reading in women’s history, and lecturing on feminist ethics. She recalls one lecture on pornography that she gave with a black woman in Wyoming, when the local feminists didn’t want to hear Roseanne’s class analysis and she and her partner were “sort of run out of there on a rail.” “They were kind of O.K. when it was about oppression of women,” she says. “But when we talked about women as oppressors of other races, they didn’t want to hear it.”

Roseanne carried the ideological battles at the bookstore into her private war over comedy. “I used to always get up and go, ‘Why are we talking to women who go to college and learn how to talk like men? Go talk to the women on welfare, if you want a fuckin' grass-roots movement,' " she says. In a letter to a lesbian comedienne whose act disgusted her, she wrote:

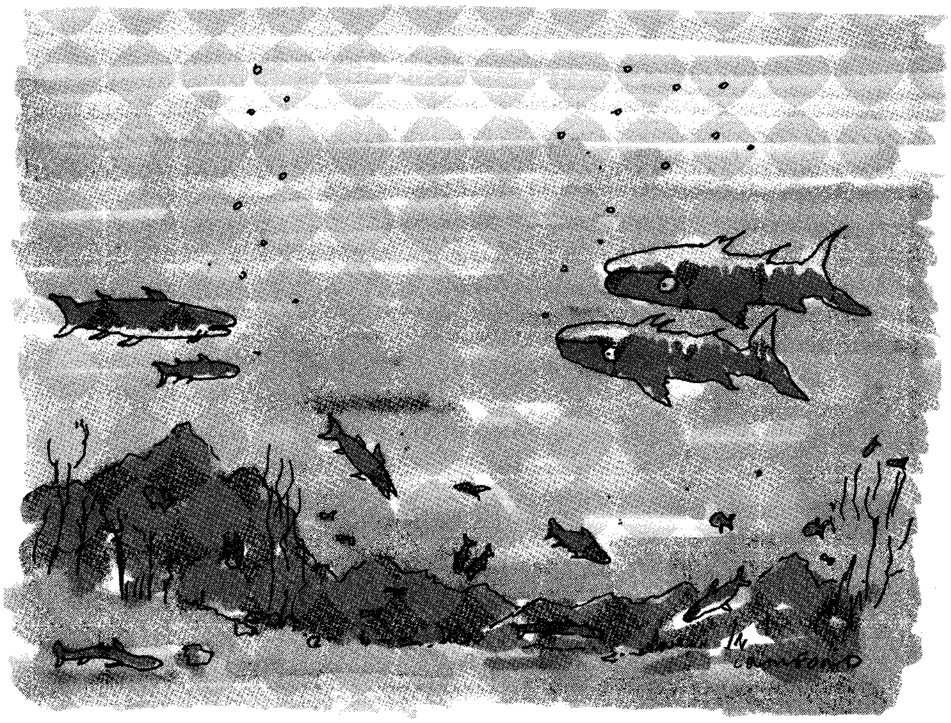
> I'm going all over this town with stories about what my life experience as a woman has been. I performed at a lesbian coffeehouse and received the stunned oxen look from all of the women/womyn/chicks there. . . . I'm going to be a comic, and I'm gonna talk about what I know, and . . . I have a place and a reason for being in this movement. Deal with me. The subtle bigotry I feel from lesbians (not all of them) infuriates me. If some comic can stand up and tell about growing up Catholic, or Jewish or Wasp, then I can tell my story about growing up straight. . . . Besides the fact that I'm married to a man, and have children, I'm the most radical woman in this town, dig it, and your heterophobia is boring. Separate your issues. If this is a woman's movement then it's only dealing with about 10% of the world's women. . . . I am one of the other 90%—deal with that. Aside from your het bigotry, you also have the attitude of otherness with black and Jewish women. Deal with it. You don't let me do my shit in front of you, and the boys don't let me do it for them. What a movement.

"The act didn't work well at the beginning," Roseanne says of finding her female comic voice in those early days, but she did have her inspired moments. "I remember Lenny Bruce said Jackie Kennedy was climbing out of the limo in Dallas to save her own ass. That's Lenny, the archetypal male comic. My joke was: I'm a woman and I know that was never, never true. She wasn't climbing out to save her own ass. She sees her husband's brains sliding down the back of the car, and she's going out there because she's trying to clean up the mess!" That particular joke was a turning point for Roseanne. She told it in a jazz club, and there was shocked recognition in the laughter she got. "I knew right then that I had hooked into exactly what I see and what I feel and the way to use language to express it," Roseanne says. Nothing now was sacred, not even the sisterhood. "I don't know why lesbians hate men," she used to joke. "They don't have to fuck them."

During her academic feminist phase, Roseanne also did a bit about breast feeding: "Contrary to popular belief, breasts are not on our body to sell stereos and cars; they're to feed children." The second time she performed it at the Comedy Works, a woman in the first row picked up her chair and turned it so that her back was to Roseanne. "I just snapped," Roseanne says. "That was when I believed in this sisterhood-feminist shit and didn't know what the real world was about. I go, 'What are you doing!' I left my text. 'Are you trying to tell your husband, "Don't worry. I'll still blow you. I won't listen to that big bad woman"?' And then I got silence. They banned me. They wouldn't let me work at the club anymore." Undaunted, she organized a protest of feminist comediennes in Boulder called Take Back the Mike and was finally reinstated without having to change her act. The victory taught Roseanne one basic maneuver of comic attack: "Don't keep secrets. Tell on 'em. Because they're weak, they can't live in the light of day."

Looking back on that difficult period now, Roseanne says, "I had to make a choice between being radical and being mainstream. I made a conscious decision that I was never going to talk that academic feminist language again. It's all about white male élitist horseshit. So I went back to the way people I grew up with, the people like me, talk. And why wouldn't we be heard? I just talk louder, and I'm heard. I'm also discredited a lot." Roseanne's rejection of manners and clean language is both a critique of and a revenge on the decorum of patriarchy, which assures that women collude in their own destruction. "I love the word 'fuck,' " she says. "It's a verb, a noun, everything, and it's just infused with intense feeling and passion, you know, negative and positive. And women aren't supposed to say it, so I try to say it as much as I can." She goes on, "When I was a teen-ager, my mother had this book called 'Fascinating Womanhood.' I opened it to a page that said, 'Watch your little girl and see how she gets her way with your husband. She snaps her head and shakes her curls. You need to emulate that. You do that if you want your way with your husband.' So he'll buy ya a friggin' toaster! I was just freaked out by it. My mother's havin' a meeting once a week with these ladies, and they talk about doin' this shit. It was so ugly, so horrible, and I'm like 'I'm never gonna get married.' One chapter was called 'Domestic Goddess': you know, you cook for him, you clean for him, you're his fuckin' slave, and you're supposed to do it all with a smile. And I just remember sitting there over breakfast with my sister and the whole thing came crashing together."

Like Chaplin discovering his bowler hat and cane, when Roseanne found the character of Domestic Goddess she found her idiom and her popularity. The first time she did the new act, in Kansas



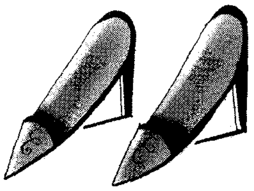
"Just ignore them. They're summer people."

City, she got a standing ovation. Lois Bromfield, a comedienne who performed with Roseanne in the early days and has become a writer on Roseanne's show, explains, "She hit that nerve of the woman in the Midwest whom nobody spoke to. They'd had no one to relate to—not for a long time."

ROSEANNE'S studio is just over the leafy foothills of Coldwater Canyon and Laurel Canyon, which wind down from fashionable Beverly Hills into the smoggy lumpen sprawl of the Valley. Here, only walking distance from her soundstage, in Studio City, is the America Roseanne speaks for: McDonald's, Winchell's doughnuts, Blockbuster Video, and Du-Par's Restaurant ("Breakfast Served All Day"), where waitresses stand on sore feet and make wisecracks, the way Roseanne herself once did.

At nine o'clock on a Monday morning, the cast and crew straggle in, and about ten minutes before the first reading of this week's script is to begin, Roseanne's stretch limo slinks into view. Her driver, who calls her Boss, opens the door for her. She is dressed in a denim skirt and pea-green hiking boots with cleated rubber soles, topped incongruously with frilly white socks. "Jesus Christ, I'm tired," she says as she emerges.

Although Roseanne is pregnant with the son she has decided to name simply Buck ("He's too macho to have a middle name"), her face and her presence have no lustre. Without eyeliner, lipstick, and blusher, which are applied only on taping days, Roseanne's definition is muted and vague. Her face has little mobility. In fact, despite her obvious intelligence and authority, there is something cadaverous about Roseanne, a deadness that only rage and laughter can banish. (She seems to love combat precisely because it makes her feel more alive.) The most cursory encounter with Roseanne and the climate of free-floating anxiety and hate in which she operates gives credence to her claims of child abuse. Something has been murdered in her; and this is palpable in the flatness of her voice, the slouch of her body, the quicksilver shifts of mood from bombast to gloom, the timidity and detachment behind her eyes. Over the last few years, Roseanne has undergone some well-publicized cosmetic operations: the breasts she used to joke about ("Actually, I only have one breast. I just part it down the middle") have been reduced; she's had a stomach tuck and a nose job. ("My face was so bad," she said. "Every time I looked in the mirror, I looked like my dad, and I couldn't stand it.") But, despite all these changes, nothing can erase the evidence of her soul's unease.



Inside the cavernous soundstage, the sets of the show are spread around like rooms in a behemoth doll's house. A table has been set up in the middle of the studio for the show's director, Gail Mancuso; the current head writer, Eric Gilliland; and members of the cast, who trickle in from the kitchen, where coffee, doughnuts, and smoked salmon are on tap. Behind the table, a number of director's chairs have been lined up for the writers, who mill around holding copies of the new show—"The Blaming of the Shrew," by Lawrence Broch. This episode of "Roseanne" is something of a rarity, because it was written solo instead of group-written, or "gang-banged"—the writers' term for the collaborative process in which the scenes are divided among teams of writers. Still, the group has been polishing Broch's work for a week prior to this first reading. Behind the writers' chairs is an entire bank of tarpaulined theatre seats that will hold the audience when the show is taped on Thursday, but today they seat only me and the parents of Ashley Johnson, a precocious and talented eleven-year-old who is to play Lisa, the "shrew" of the piece, with whom D.J., Roseanne's fictional son, is to have his first date.

Roseanne pulls up a chair between John Goodman, who plays her husband, Dan Conner, and Laurie Metcalf, who plays her neurotic fictional sister, Jackie. Ranged around the table are Michael Fishman (D.J.), Michael O'Keefe (Jackie's reticent husband, Fred), Johnny Galecki (the erstwhile boyfriend of Roseanne's younger fictional daughter, Darlene; Darlene herself—the hilarious Sara Gilbert—is at Yale, where she is an art major), and Ellen DeGeneres, who is making a guest appearance on this episode, as an inept therapist trying to give marriage guidance to Jackie and Fred.

Roseanne remembers the first time she took a seat at a production read-through, before she'd wrested control of her show from the producers. "They had, like, extras and the crew people sitting at the far end of the table, and the stars up at the other end of the table," she recalls. "I remember walking in and going, 'Oh, Jesus Christ! Everything in the men's world is exactly like the Army. Everything's militaristic. Rank.' I thought, How am I gonna do it? I was really into being an anarchist then. So I sat at the end with the crew guys. The producers were so pissed! But I wanted to make the statement that this show wasn't about corporate America, it wasn't about corporate thinking, it was about people, the American people."

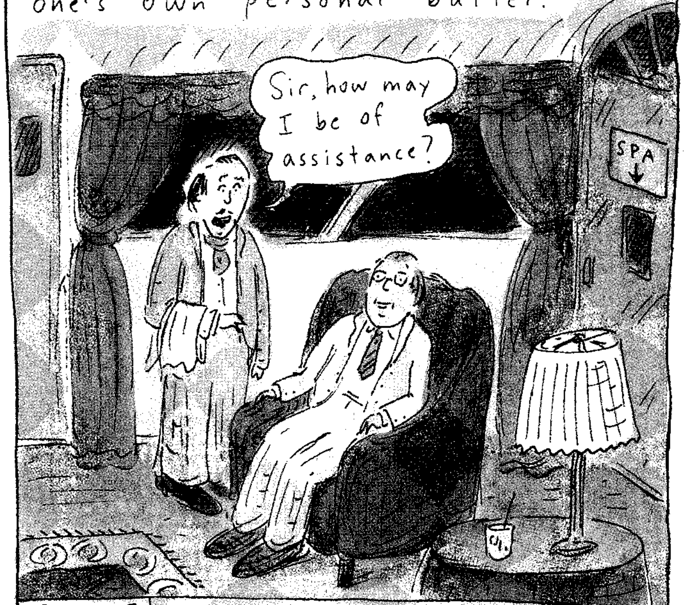
Now Roseanne greets the assembled table with "Happy Purim," and everyone laughs. To Roseanne, the calm here is the calm of a battlefield after the bodies have been removed. "Everybody's banned," she says. "And they have been since the third show. Banned." That is, the network is banned; the advertisers are banned; even the owners of the show, Carsey-Werner, are banned from Roseanne's space. According to Marcy Carsey—who, along with her partner, Tom Werner, has produced "The Cosby Show," "Cybill," and "Grace Under Fire"—Roseanne walked off the show "five or six times" during the first thirteen episodes. Carsey prefers to think of their absence from Roseanne's set as a choice rather than a requirement. "We made a judgment; I don't know if it was right or not," Carsey says. "We thought that part of the thing Roseanne was doing was acting out against authority, which she saw as us. So we thought—like the good parents we are sometimes—that when somebody is acting out like that you stay away for a while. We talked to the writers, went over stories, edited rough cuts. We just weren't on the set."

Part of the battle between Roseanne and her producers has been about the ownership of the show. Although Roseanne may own the show's success, she does not completely own its origins. In 1987, Roseanne had craftily designed her first HBO special as a kind of pilot

THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE M.T.A.

THE QUEEN ELIZABETH III

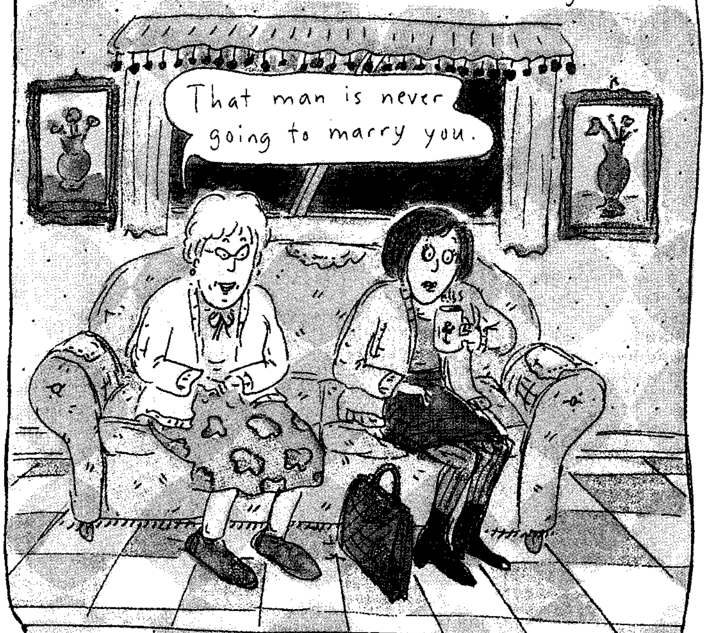
Pamper yourself on your next trip underground. Special features include fine French cuisine, an on-board spa, and one's own personal butler.


Sir, how may I be of assistance?
SPA ↓

SAMPLE FARE: De Kalb Ave. to 34th St. : $ 7,000

MOM'S SUBWAY SERVICE

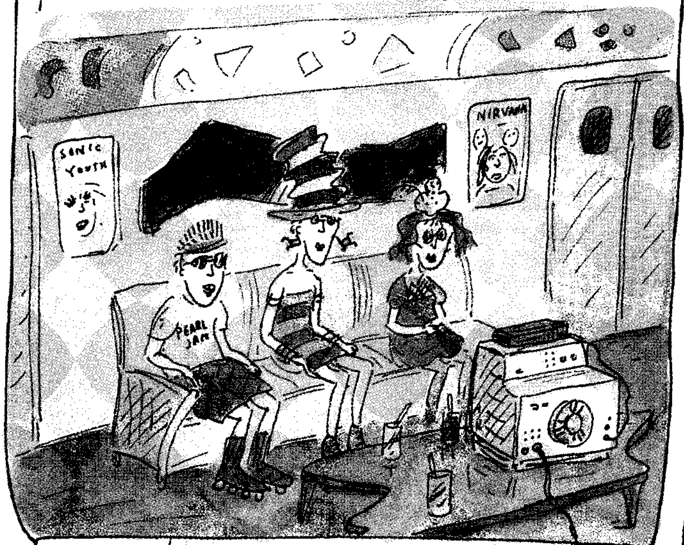
It's as if you'd never left home when you travel with "Mom." Extra sweater, cup of broth, and personal advice included with every token.


That man is never going to marry you.

SAMPLE FARE: Newkirk Ave. to Columbus Circle: $ 10

THE ALTERNATE TRAIN

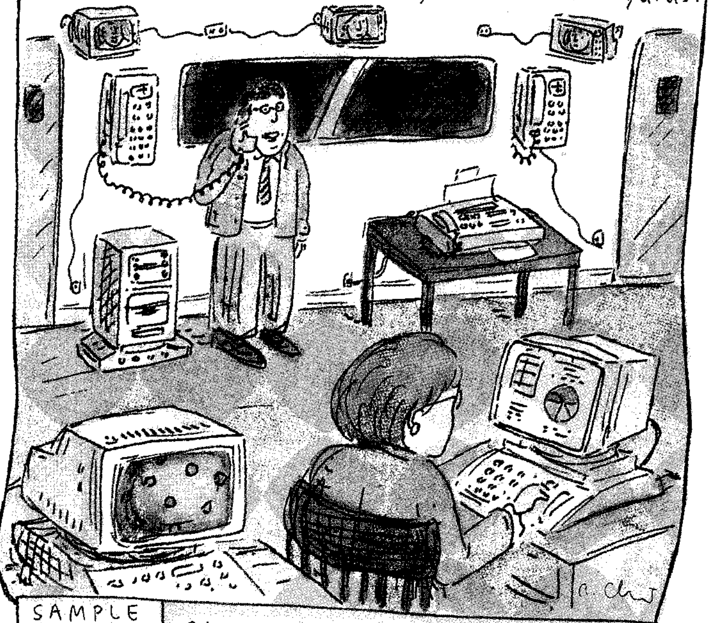
If you want to go someplace but want to, like, go a cooler way, then this is the train for you. Non-stop music videos plus all the Fruitopia you can drink.


SONIC YOUTH
NIRVANA
PEARL JAM

SAMPLE FARE: Van Wyck Blvd. to West 4th St.:
- Under 24 yrs. : free
- 24 and over : $ 500

THE ON-LINE LINE

For those who cannot stand to be disconnected for even a minute. Phones, faxes, TV, computers, CD-ROMS, the whole nine yards.



SAMPLE FARE: Clark St. to 86th St. : $ 99 to present her trailer-trash character to the networks, even briefly going into a backstage double-wide to deal with her beer-swilling couch potato of a husband and her bumptious kids. Roseanne wanted to create a TV sitcom around her domestic-goddess character, and her agents had her taking meetings all over town. Meanwhile, quite independently, Carsey-Werner was developing a show about a working mother. "We were looking for the outrageous voice that could be the center of the show," Carsey says. "We pitched it to Roseanne. But the fact is that that show was in development. She was cast in the role, and she brought a lot to the role."

Roseanne, however, is her own greatest creation, and the imperialism of her fame extends to the show, which she sees as incontrovertibly hers. She wanted to run it her way. Martin Luther announced his revolution by nailing ninety-five theses to the church door; Roseanne announced hers by posting a one-page broadsheet, which is now framed in the makeup room of her trailer, on her dressing-room door. She prophesied that the show would be a hit (it went to No. 1 after the ninth episode), and the document served notice on the company to behave or be gone. It said,

> THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO BE FIRED IF THEY'RE NOT NICE TO ME. PEOPLE WHO *I* AM BOSS OF—EVERYBODY 'CAUSE *I* GOT MY OWN TV SHOW. ALL PRODUCERS, ALL WRITERS, ALL SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Below was a long list that Roseanne had graded and, she says, continued to grade every week. Those in her good graces got a check by their names; those in bad odor got "applicable" written beside theirs. Some, who were on probation, got "not applicable as yet."

Seven years on, Roseanne finds this memento of those embattled early days "hilarious." She still has skirmishes with her writers, but the worst one was the first. In the inaugural script for the show, written by Matt Williams, a former producer-writer on "Cosby" who is credited as the creator of "Roseanne" (and who refused to be interviewed for this article), Roseanne was the passive second banana. "The sister was my character," Roseanne says. "And I was like June Cleaver: 'And then what happened, darling?' "

CURATOR

At six foot four you dwarfed your protégés,
Whose pictures hung on the flaking paint
Of your East Village railroad apartment.
In your long absences the modest rooms,
Looking out on the hustlers of St. Marks Place
Through the indulgent eye of a dusty window,
Stood as your substitute, your understudy.
This was your home; its grain and shadow
Ran with your heart's own blood and breath:
It was almost you! Your antic melancholy;
Hot water ran from the cold tap in the bath . . .

This was your city, too, if less
Lived in than longed for in other places;
The one soul-easing garden for a soul
Who disliked gardens, found the Great Outdoors
With its model's narcissistic smile
Downright suspect. This was all you needed
Of countryside: a subway's grove of girders
Lichened by graffiti, coiling
Creepers of razor wire, plus the odd
Hydrant bubbling like a forest spring . . .
Home! In our itinerants' sense of the word:

Roseanne claims that the producers were going behind her back to Goodman and Metcalf to suggest they do the show without her, and says she was shocked that Williams had demoted her defiant character to a feed. "We had a war from Day One," she says. "He goes, 'Well, I don't think people will like you.' And I go, 'Well, if they don't like me, why did I get this show?' " The show was then called "Life and Stuff," and that was another point of loud contention. "I go, 'What are you tellin' me? It's called "Life and Stuff"? Kiss my ass! It's called "Roseanne." ' He just went insane, and I went insane, too." Roseanne kept rewriting Williams's scripts. She recalls one of their shouting matches at the ABC offices, when Williams tipped over a table: "He goes, 'I'm not your fucking scribe! I write what's meaningful to me! I'm a fuckin' writer! I'm an artist!' And I'd be like, 'Well, not on this show, by God. You're gonna write what I tell you to write.' " Roseanne characterizes her fury as "so strong I could've sucked out his will to live with my nostrils." Williams and Roseanne crossed their Rubicon, which she describes in "My Lives," on the fourth episode. In a love scene with John Goodman, Roseanne refused to say, "Well, you're my equal in bed, but that's it."

"That is not a woman's voice," Roseanne said. "And I'm not gonna say it."

"You will say it as written," Williams replied.

What followed was one of the high-water marks in the annals of entertainment intransigence: Roseanne's infamous sit-in—or, rather, bed-in. "I said, 'When this show goes to No. 1, you're fuckin' outta here.' I didn't have anything. They had fifteen lawyers. They come stand around me: 'Say the line, Roseanne, as written.' I say, 'No, I'm not gonna fuckin' say it.' It was so horrible." Pentland, who had quit his thirty-thousand-dollar-a-year job with the post office after Roseanne's success, was at home minding their three kids when Roseanne's SOS came from the studio. "It was like talking to someone in a bunker over a military telephone," Pentland says. "Carsey-Werner's attorneys were down there saying, 'You're in breach of contract. You're going to lose the show.' We renewed our faith in that call. We'd lived broke, and we could do it again if we had to. We decided that if we let them win she would lose control of everything she'd been working for. Once

That which we do not live in. That which grows
Vaguer and more important every year.
Rumors of breakdown reached us from elsewhere:
Sickness, depression in San Francisco's
Too lushly green unshadowed atmosphere.
But here, here where we saw you last,
Cream-suited, a resplendent tan
Gilding your grin, you seemed yourself, your several
Dissonant selves resolved in one strong chord:
Anxious, avuncular, waspishly good-humored,
Urbane East Coaster, Tennessee Gentleman.

Last months: the fumbled endgame
Of one who seemed to side with circumstance
Against himself. You lost the flat,
Then cut loose cavalierly from the city,
Though even as you had your things shipped out
You started plotting career moves back.
What had you seen too late? We watched the movers
Empty your sprawl of rooms into a truck;
Reckless, beloved friend! Scars blotched the walls
As if the things were torn from them by violence;
So in us your sudden absence hurts.

—JAMES LASDUN

they couldn't bluff, they lost their ability to intimidate her. It was kind of like the Cuban missile crisis, when Dean Rusk said, 'The other guy blinked.' From that moment on, she had control of the show and made it into a much better product."

ROSEANNE'S neurotic TV family was the first one to put America in contact with something resembling real life in the working-class world—a place where children are difficult, parents have real emotional and financial problems, and there's a discrepancy between what American society promises and what it delivers. The message of "Roseanne" flies in the face of the vision of consumer contentment conjured by the show's advertisers, who currently cough up about a quarter of a million dollars per thirty seconds to be on during her show, the fourth-highest rate on ABC (after the Super Bowl, the Academy Awards, and "Home Improvement").

"Working-class people have to work really, really hard for just the smallest thing, so they're stronger," Roseanne says. "They're more into God, more into community, more into family than middle-class people are. Totally. Middle-class people are fearful of losing. So everything is about a fear of loss. When everything's based on money, everything's for sale, including their integrity and their morals." Over the years, the Conners' struggles have provided Roseanne and her writers with opportunities to discuss racism, unemployment, lesbianism, abortion, aging, and masturbation, among many other issues. ("On my show, I'm the boss," Roseanne said in a special episode that brought her together with many of the famous TV moms of earlier eras; "and Father Knows Squat.") In the story that the actors are reading today, D.J. is in thrall to Lisa, a pint-size bundle of assertiveness who is Roseanne in miniature. Lisa calls D.J. "doofus," complains about her corsage for the dance, and generally rules the roost. Dan doesn't like seeing D.J. bossed around; Roseanne, of course, loves it. "If a boy is pushing a girl around, he's trying to keep her *down*," Roseanne explains to Dan. "But if a girl is pushing a boy around, she's trying to elevate herself. Can't you see that? Boys bullying girls is a step backwards. But girls bullying boys—now, that's the future." D.J. and Lisa skip school, go to Chicago, and are brought home by Dan, who then enlists Roseanne both to punish D.J. for his truancy and to offer some sound parental advice about equality in relationships. Meanwhile, in the subplot, Jackie and Fred are in therapy, discussing their relationship.

As the episode is read—and read well—by the cast, the writers cheer the script on. There is nothing more ravishing to a writer than to hear words sweated out in private get laughs in public. It's like planning a party and hoping that it turns into a blast; the anxiety is that a good time won't be had by all. Here "all" means Roseanne. A dip in the collective response at the first reading might cause Roseanne to draw a haphazard line through a speech or a page—a gesture that in a nanosecond may wipe out a good part of a writer's weekly work. So the writer's non-stop hee-hawing—a kind of laughter that combines exhaustion, hopefulness, and fear—is to an outsider's ear slightly frantic and unreal. Sometimes an actor gives the words an unexpected spin, and then the tension momentarily collapses. The room is suddenly gleeful, hooting it up, thrilled by the promise of the writers' collective mischief. Today, Roseanne is enjoying things—especially Ashley Johnson's no-nonsense Lisa, who clocks all the different haircuts of the Conner men standing by the door and says, "Man, who gets drunk and cuts this family's hair?" And later, when Jackie gets on her high horse and says to Roseanne, "I'm just waiting to hear you say 'You may be right, Jackie,' " Roseanne's comeback, the writers agree, is a "classic Roseanne line": "Yeah, and I'm waiting for chocolate air." The phrase brings the house down and earns the kind of look from Roseanne that the writers are always watching for—that wide-eyed twinkle that says nothing short of nuclear attack will make her part with the words.

AFTER the reading, the writers amble back to their warrens in Building 3, some four hundred yards away from the studio, while Roseanne and Gail Mancuso get to work on the therapist scene. After a couple of passes at it, DeGeneres looks over at Roseanne and says, "I'm completely mirroring Jackie's emotions, which I think is so wrong for a shrink."

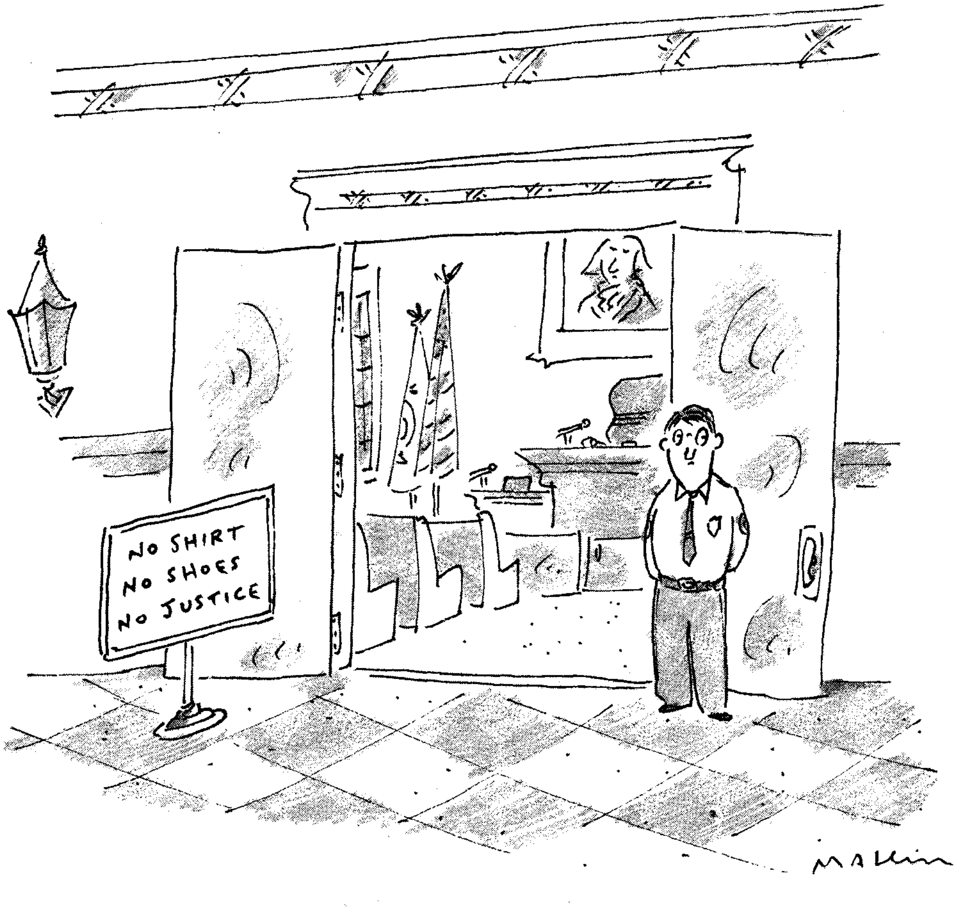
"I hate headshrinkers so much,"

Roseanne says. That statement leads to a discussion of psychiatrists' fees. DeGeneres says hers is ninety dollars an hour. “Is that what they cost?” Roseanne asks, taking a sudden detour down memory lane. “Mine was three-fifty. It was about that good. My first one, I remember, used to fall asleep. While we were all talkin'. Community mental-health association. My little sister was only about six, and she didn't want to be involved in the family therapy. She brought her toothbrush and knitting. She'd sit there and knit and then take her toothbrush out and rub it on the wall. Every one of us would do something to signal that we weren't interested. We had the cheesiest.”

But Roseanne's subsequent therapy has brought her some measure of understanding. In “My Lives” she challenges the notion, promoted by her family in various interviews, that the abuse in her household was just ordinary family horseplay. (Roseanne claims that her sisters were both abused, too; they deny it.) Roseanne writes, “Everyone's Dad sticks his hand down his daughters' pants, squeezes their tits, their ass, their legs. *Every* twelve-year-old gets photographed with a movie camera by her father while she's in the tub. . . . *All* fathers talk sexually all the time to their daughters, don't they? *All* mothers hold pillows over their children's faces until they black out or pretend to, and stare at their children with hatred-edged eyes. There were no boundaries.” Roseanne remembers watching her parents being interviewed on “60 Minutes”: “They said they didn't molest their children. They were a family of fanny pinchers. . . . What they were saying was—and this is exactly how it was in my childhood—We're gonna pinch your fannies as much as we want even if it makes you horrifically uncomfortable and scared and destroys everything in you.” She goes on, “That's how they think. They're trying to use the semantics of language to cover up what they do, which is why I'm so into naming things. It's not ‘fanny-pinching’—it's naked ass-grabbing. There's a big fuckin' difference.”

Roseanne's parents, Helen and Jerry Barr, have not been in contact with Roseanne except by lawyer since her public statement about their child abuse. Roseanne now says she is “at peace” with herself about it. In 1987, in her first HBO special, Roseanne thanked her parents for letting their children “say whatever we wanted as long as it was funny.” In one “Roseanne” episode, there is a moving moment when her father has died, and Roseanne is left alone beside his coffin at the funeral home. Roseanne takes out a piece of paper on which she has written her last goodbye, which turns out to be an indictment. “O.K.—I'm angry at you for lying to me my whole life,” she says. “I'm angry that I didn't ever know who you really were. I'm mad that when I was a kid you ignored me and when you did give me any attention it was usually violent. I'm mad that you left us alone with a crazy mother. I'm mad that because of you I grew up distrustful of men and I couldn't even trust my own husband for the first five years we were married.” Roseanne concludes, “So, Dad, I'm forgiving you, just because I need to move on with my life. And I forgive myself for being so damn angry.” She lifts the lid of the coffin, places her list of grievances inside, and, at the door, turns back and says, “Thank you for your humor. I love you. G'bye.” The speech, which Roseanne says she wrote, sums up the blessings and the barbarity of the Barr family. But the scene also demonstrates how Roseanne negotiates her survival. She literally deposits her grievances with someone else and walks away. In life, she does the same thing. Instead of being persecuted, Roseanne persecutes; instead of being shamed, she attacks; instead of being annihilated, she annihilates.

Roseanne recalls that her first family target was her Uncle Sherman, who used to denigrate her grandmother's cooking while scarfing it. “I'd say things to my uncle like ‘Well, if you don't like the soup, why do you eat five bowls of it?’ ” she says. “He'd laugh. My mother would laugh—until one day he got mad and said, ‘You've got a smart mouth, little girl.’ And I said, ‘Well, yeah, but just because you can't answer me.’ You know, the way kids do. My grandmother turned around and said, ‘Shut up. You have to respect him. He's your elder.’ And I remember this huge catharsis in my head, like ‘Oh, well, women aren't supposed to defend themselves against men. There's always some sort of threat if you do.’ And I just thought about that forever and ever. I always understood that the women in my family were not assuming any of the power that was inherently theirs. They apologized for it.



It always appalled me, and it still appalls me." But in those days if Roseanne wasn't venting her aggression in jokes, she couldn't express anger or deal with problematic situations at home except in a cartoonish play voice. "I always defined it as a play voice till I went into therapy and found out it's a person," Roseanne says, of the personality she calls Cindy, who is, she says, "probably the person who most saved my life." Roseanne goes on, "One time I was hosting 'Saturday Night Live.' I wanted to do a sketch with Cindy in it, 'cause I was getting real brave and I'd been in therapy for a couple of years and I thought I would be able to handle it. So I allowed her to come through, and the other actors were real scared, 'cause you can sort of tell it's not a character. It's a person."

Victoria Roberts

"Oh, for butter curls on ice!"

AT the end of the DeGeneres scene, Roseanne settles into a leather armchair perched on a wooden trolley and calls over some of her assistants, pointing in the direction of the Conners' kitchen. "Girls," she says, "pull me over there." The sight of Roseanne being lugged across the studio strikes everybody, including Roseanne, as amusing. "This is the port-a-throne," she says. She passes the time between setups talking with the crew, hankering out loud for Swensen's Sticky Chewy Chocolate ice cream, and casting a beady eye over the script of each scene after it has been rehearsed. Roseanne's line "In this family we solve our own problems. No psychiatrists. No therapists . . . no pediatricians" is sent back to the Big Room for more work. "If I don't get it, the public won't get it. I'm dumber than they are," she says. And the line at the end of Act I also displeases her. D.J. has been grounded after being AWOL with Lisa in Chicago. "You like him going with Lisa," Dan needles Roseanne, in the act's final beat. "And if it doesn't work out with her, I hear Squeaky Fromme is up for parole soon." Goodman gets a laugh from the crew, but Roseanne thinks the reference is passé. She says, "We're gonna dump that. I need a better line."

"Are there any great women criminals anymore?" Goodman asks.

"Yeah, me," Roseanne says.

Roseanne sidles up to the script supervisor, Hayden Ghaffary, whose job it is to relay Roseanne's notes directly to the head writer, in the Big Room, and tosses the script on the lectern. "Act II, Scene 2," Roseanne says to her. "I want it beat everywhere. It's sappy shit." In sitcom slang, "beat" means to better a line, which is what the writers, working in teams, spend most of their waking hours trying to do. Their private term for this enterprise is "feeding the monster."

Roseanne employs more writers for her show than are employed on any other sitcom, and she mixes standup comics in with TV writers, to give the comics on-the-job training in commercial storytelling. This "comedy college" consists of a relatively young, morose group made up mostly of men. The actors keep a cordial distance from them; the burnout rate here is high, and the brass are loath to fraternize with the enlisted men. (Eight of the twenty-four writers assembled for the run-through will not return for Roseanne's eighth season.) "I have six kids," says Dave Raether, a veteran of three seasons. "I have dinner with my family maybe once every three weeks." But the compensation for the fourteen-hour days is a king's ransom. Even a mid-level writer who stays for a few years will have made his million, or close to it; and the head writer, Eric Gilliland, who is thirty-two, will make two and a half million dollars this year, whether he finishes the season or not.

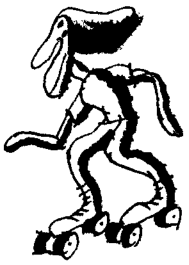
At noon, when the writers are summoned from their compound to take their first look at the episode on its feet, they follow the show from set to set. All the while, of course, they laugh. Beside me, William Lucas Walker, an executive story editor, is watching Roseanne closely and making marks in his script. A wavy line means that a joke needs work; a small check means a titter; a large check means a boff, or big laugh; and an "R" means Roseanne laughed. ("Here's how you can tell if it's funny," Roseanne explained later. "If I say it and nobody laughs, it's not funny.") For the writers, every day is a war of attrition, but when a big joke stays in, like one that Walker got into the pot-smoking episode—where Dan, in a wave of sixties nostalgia, recalls the slogan "Today is the first day of the rest of your life," and Roseanne says, "Who ever knew it was going to be such a long, bad day?"—the battle seems worth the effort. "If I write a play," Walker explains, "thirty million people aren't going to laugh at a joke I wrote."

Once the run-through is over, a sudden entropy envelops the place. Roseanne disappears into her trailer for meetings, and without her gravitational pull the studio loses its sense of agitation and fun. The actors go home; the writers drift back to their offices, complaining about cuts. "The show's O.K.," says Walker, beckoning to one of the writers. “But it’ll be a lot stronger by Thursday.” Danny Zuker approaches, dressed in shorts, his shirttail dangling underneath a jean jacket. Walker introduces him to me as the Mel Brooks of the staff.

“I can’t believe you guys can laugh all week at the stuff you’ve written,” I say.

“It’s easy once you sell your soul,” Zuker says.

At nine-thirty on Tuesday morning, Ghaffary is on the phone to Gilliland, who is in the writers’ main building. The actors are called for ten, but it’s clear from the urgency in Ghaffary’s voice that Roseanne is already on the premises. “There was a slight logic problem, and Roseanne found a way to fix it,” Ghaffary says. “Page twelve. Before D.J. and Lisa leave. She’s cut everything after that speech until page fifteen. She wants some sort of conflict before they exit, and she would like that before the run-through. In an hour.”



“I need a rewrite!”

Roseanne’s voice precedes her, and, like her body, it takes up space. She looms into view wearing a black beret and a turquoise T-shirt that says “It Must Be Venus Envy.” “Roseanne is just an explosion,” says the writer Lois Bromfield. The male writers may privately curse Roseanne’s abrasive blasts, but the women on the staff are thrilled by them. “If she threw scripts at people and called the head writer ‘boy’—all things I’ve seen her do—and she was wrong, Roseanne would be insane,” Bromfield says. “But here’s the incredible part. She’s almost always right.” Roseanne’s concern of the moment is a short trailer-park scene, for an episode that is to be taped along with “The Blaming of the Shrew” on Thursday. Roseanne has donated a walk-on part for a charity auction, and, paying fifteen hundred dollars for the privilege, Sharon Stone has bought it. “Can we get a rewrite?” Roseanne asks Ghaffary, and then grabs the phone from her to speak directly to Gilliland. “Did you hear all this stuff about the rules she’s got?” Roseanne says about Stone’s Thursday schedule. “It’s unbelievable. She’ll be here at one-thirty to acclimate. Two hours for makeup. Can you dig that? And she wants a tight pink beautician’s outfit. Two hours for makeup! I said, ‘Just tell her to get up out of bed and come down. That’s what she should look like.’ Is *that hilarious? Do you love that?* So, we won’t be able to start the show till seven-thirty.”

Later, inside the tidy calm of her trailer, Roseanne’s persona softens. There is a punch-in lock on her trailer door, a bodyguard outside talking on the limousine’s car phone. “For me, as a woman, the only place on earth that’s ever existed that I don’t feel all the male oppression is just inside my little office,” she says. Roseanne, the star and executive producer of her show, puts her job description this way: “I’m a real good editor. I just edit down to get to the jokes quicker. You’ll notice that yesterday I did a lot of general editing; today I started on the jokes. I always make sure that everybody else has their jokes, and then, on Wednesday, I do mine. My jokes.” Roseanne has always written jokes. “It’s like automatic writing. It’s all unconscious. Comedy’s about the unconscious,” she says. “If you can tap into that. It’s only about four or five times a year that I can do that.” But the gruelling production schedule can’t wait for Roseanne’s unconscious to kick in, and therefore she needs writers. This haunts and infuriates her, and makes for an uneasy alliance with the help. Earlier in the morning, as I stood watching Roseanne rehearse, a writer, unknown to me and asking for anonymity, whispered, “She doesn’t write the show. She never has written the show. In general, when she does decide to participate, like this week, because you’re here, she’s the source of very bad ideas that the writers have to circumnavigate to make the show any good at all.”

Roseanne dismisses this kind of vitriol as typical male folderol. “They’re so horrified of their mothers’ power that they have to spend their whole life diminishing it,” she says. In any case, the argument about creative ownership of the show is academic: Roseanne owns the mill and the charisma. And she treats the writers as extensions of herself. “I give them a big speech in the beginning,” Roseanne says, and, without much coaxing, launches into it: “The world is run by women, contrary to what you believe—especially the family, especially the working-class family. These women that we’re doing the show about, they make no compromises. They don’t kowtow to men like middle-class women do.” But Roseanne says it’s hard to find men or women who can write about a working-class milieu. “This is the best group I’ve ever had,” she says. “But, by virtue of the fact that they’re male, they can only write what they’ve seen about women. So I try to get women in here, and they can’t do it, either. In order to get power in Hollywood, or anywhere in the world, they’ve had to emulate men. They sound like male voices. The thing that’s always missing in the stuff they write for me is the anarchy and the fight. They don’t get it. Because they’re so fucking damaged—if you want the bottom line—that they cannot see a woman as anything but a big, loving, nurturer sex thing. I see it in their work. When I get tougher with them, I get back castration and mutilation jokes. I’m like, ‘Now I have to go back there and baby these fuckers along to get a decent joke out of them that has a woman’s point of view.’ ” She goes on, “I had to find a place where they loved me as well as feared me. It’s like being Big Mama. I always have to have my tit out for every fuckin’ one of ’em, you know. I resent it. It’s a big drain.”

Roseanne’s notion of mothering includes the knowledge that “they like to be spanked.” And although Roseanne claims that her tongue-lashings are “an act”—part of the negotiating skills she’s had to learn to get the best work from her writers—they also express her very real ambivalence. Kevin Abbott, one of the show’s senior producer-writers, who will not be back next year, recalls how Roseanne spoke to the writers in March, at the first reading after Rob Ulin was deposed and Gilliland was promoted to replace him: “She starts off, ‘I just want to say for all of you who don’t know—Rob is dead; Eric is doing a great job. I’m really happy right now. And if I don’t like the next one, I’ll fire you, too. No, no, I don’t mean that . . . I’m just sayin’. . .’ She’d say something nice and immediately undercut it with something vicious. The writers were just staring at her with no idea of how to react. ‘I really wanted to say something nice,’ she said. ‘But I just can’t. It all just keeps coming out mean.’

At one point, somebody laughed, and she turned and said, 'Don't laugh unless I tell you to!' So then there's a dead silence. Finally, Matt Berry goes, 'Can we laugh now?' She has a real love-hate relationship with writers. She really resents whatever they bring her."

Part of Roseanne's behavior can be explained by the comic's natural competitiveness. "I can't ever let anybody be funnier than me," she says. "I guess 'cause of my father, or something in my childhood. I just feel like this is *war*." But Roseanne's ferocity may come down to something else. "They frighten me," she says of the writers, comparing herself to a lion tamer. "I always have my whip. If I didn't have my whip and my chair in front of me, I wouldn't go into that goddam cage. They scare the shit out of me. I'm not lying. And not just men. Women scare me, too, especially the women that are out here. They don't even know that everything they're doing is against themselves."

Today, a young woman writer is ushered into the trailer to be interviewed by Roseanne, and Roseanne is cordial but reserved. The writer seems genuinely awed to be in Roseanne's presence, but rallies to roll her credits: "Uncle Buck," "Out All Night," "Pride & Joy." Roseanne cuts in to ask if she has children. No, she says, but her sister does, and they're darling. Roseanne asks when she could start, saying, "I do need women on the show. I especially need women committed to doin' the stuff that women really do." She suggests that the writer do a few scenes for the show, and then there is some flimflammery about writing commitments: the writer doesn't have the time just now, but she promises something within a few weeks, and leaves. The interview has lasted perhaps five minutes. Afterward, as Roseanne is herding me toward the door, she says, "See, that's what happens. Almost uniformly, always what happens with women. They come to interview for the job, but they don't want the job. They tell you they're not going to do it by saying what she said. Then you're real nice to them so they don't sell a story about you to the *Enquirer*." Roseanne laughs, and adds, "When I realized that I couldn't find any women writers, I went to my women friends who were comics, who'd got pretty well beaten down in the comedy clubs tryin' to say things as women. I got 'em, and I go, 'I want you to say the worst shit you always wanted to say. Send me stuff that just shocks me and scares me every single day and I'll tone it down.' That's how I got 'Absolutely Fabulous.' I'm using these women comics. They're just awesome." (The pilot, written by Jennifer Saunders and Roseanne, with Lois Bromfield, Ruby Wax, and Cynthia Mort, is being completed as we speak.)

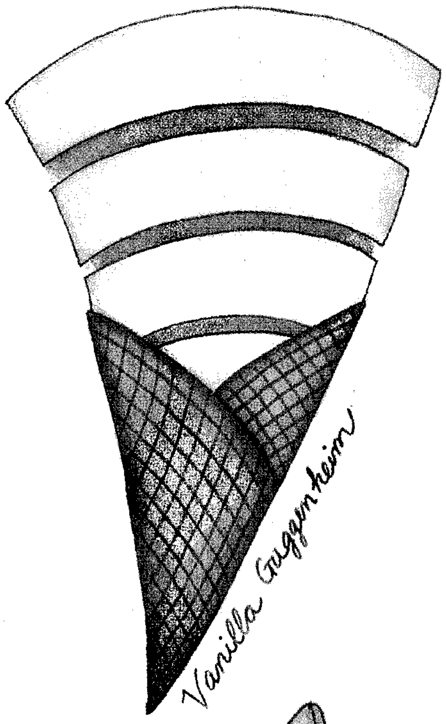
At the door, she says, "Women like the one I just interviewed and most of the women I see don't have any ambition. They're satisfied if two or three of their jokes get into a show. Anyone who shows up and wants to stick her neck out and take the shit that comes from that, man, I'd take them in a second. It pisses me off, because when I was home with my three kids, and I was going to do standup, I'd get up and sit in a closet with a flashlight on 'cause my husband was asleep to write the shit I had to write. And so do a lot of women have to do that." She opens the trailer door to the glare of the afternoon. "So, if you just don't have the time right now," she says, "fuck you."

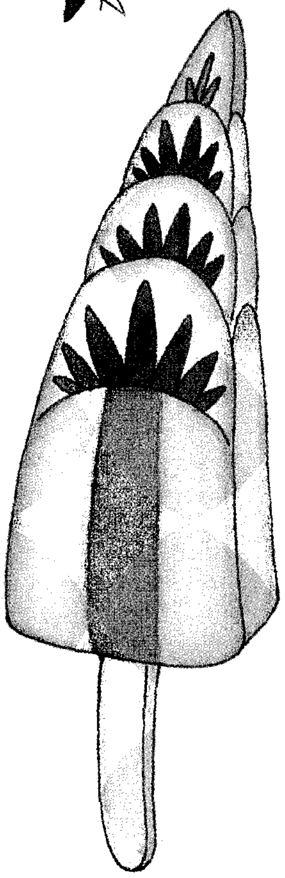
OVER at the writers' compound, Dave Raether sits at his computer trying to focus the wandering minds of his comic team, who are sprawled on sofas in one of the joke rooms. A former journalist from Minnesota, Raether is the only one here who isn't a standup comedian. Matt Berry, Allan Stephan, Ed Yeager, and even Bromfield, the room's missing ingredient, who is off polishing the "AbFab" pilot, were all veterans of comedy-club circuits, and old publicity photographs of their standup selves are the only decorations on the walls. To describe the group's method of comic creation as "improvisation" doesn't do the process justice. It's more like throwing food at a wall and whatever sticks is what stays in the script. At this particular moment, the room is trying to find words for an exchange between Jackie and Roseanne about therapy.

"Is there anything about the therapist?" Raether asks. "How nice she was? How fucked up she was? Is there something that the therapist did that's funny?"

"Something about the room," says Yeager, a trim man with thinning hair

Good Humor Landmarks
by Andrea Arroyo





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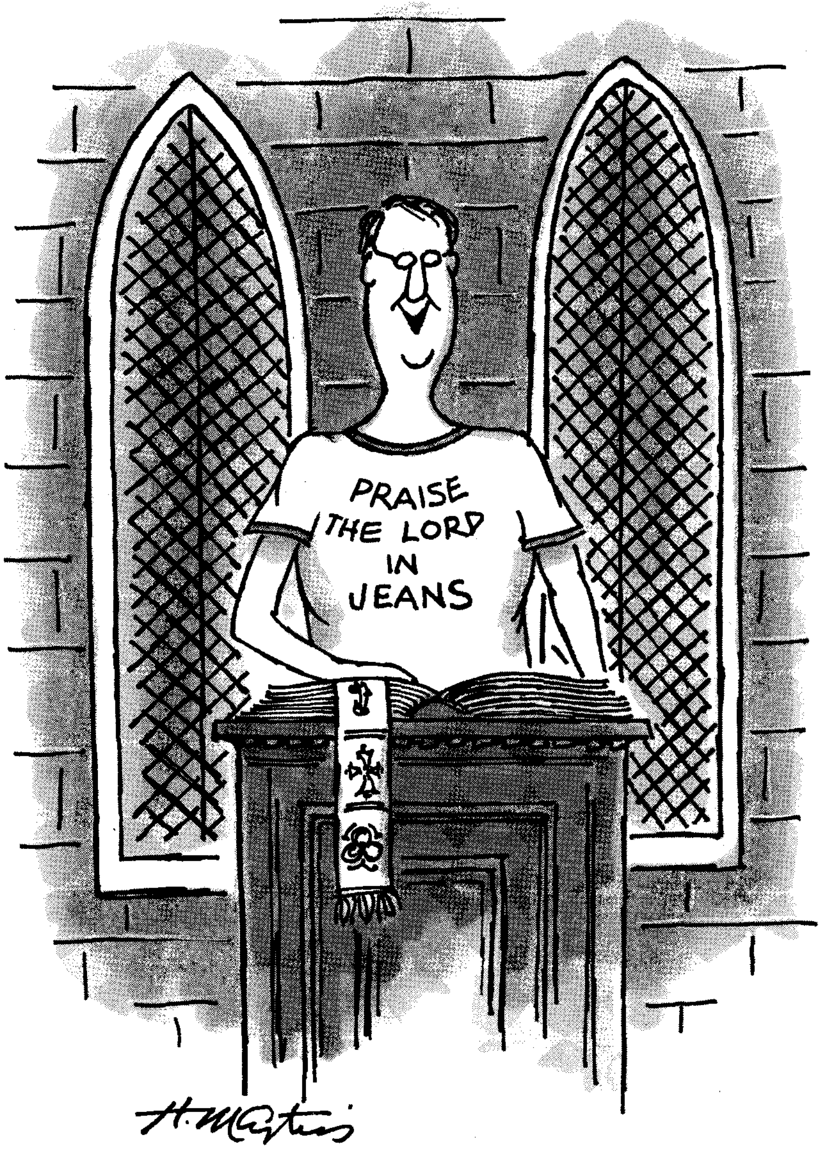

PRAISE THE LORD IN JEANS

"Welcome to our first dress-down Sunday."

• •

who was with Roseanne in her Denver days. " 'You think that office was designed to make you feel comfortable.' "

" 'Very much like this kitchen,' " Yeager says.

" 'They must have the same designer,' " Stephan says.

" 'Must have the same designer,' " Raether repeats, turning back to his computer. "That's a good setup. O.K. Let's get some more jokes out of that."

As the afternoon wears on, Raether focusses his team on the last of their jokes to beat, where Roseanne and Dan try to talk to D.J. about being led around by Lisa. He reads the group in: " 'Well, what your mom means is, we know why you keep going out with her.' D.J.: ' 'Cause she tells me to.' " Raether looks up. "He's under her spell," he says.

" 'I put him under a spell,' " Stephan says. " 'She casts her spell. . . .' 'Dominating little bitch' won't work, will it?"

The room laughs, and Raether says, "That's sort of the joke. She's the sorcerer."

" 'Check his pupils, Dan. See if they're dilated.' "

" 'We need an exorcist.' "

" 'Check his balls.' "

" 'We need an exorcist.' " Raether laughs. "Good."

"Suddenly we're comin' alive here," Matt Berry says.

"How many have we got, Dave?" Stephan asks.

"Four," Raether says.

Stephan presses on. " 'And I thought they broke the mold with me,' " he says.

"Is there a twist?" Raether asks. "A different way of saying it? Roseanne fucks up the saying, makes it bigger."

"Wait a minute," Yeager says. " 'After I was made, they broke the mold.' "

" 'Apparently they fixed my broken mold,' " Raether says.

"There you go," Stephan says. "Go for it."

"I'd try it," Matt Berry says. "What the hell. If they don't get it . . ."

It's time to pitch to the Big Room.

THE Big Room houses a well-polished table and three senior producer-writers, who, by this hour in the afternoon, have lost some of their shine. Gilliland, whose shoulder-length hair and square-rimmed glasses make him a dead ringer for Mike in "Doonesbury," is slumped in the middle of the table with his head on the script, and Miriam Trogdon, a supervising producer, sits across from him with a row of empty Evian bottles lined up in front of her; at the end of the table is Kevin Abbott. Outside, palm fronds rustle in the bright day; inside, the Big Room has the crepuscular gloom of a writer's den. An amanuensis types every agreed-upon new joke into a portable computer, and the revision is instantaneously projected above him on a TV monitor.

"When I go in to pitch, I just enjoy it so much," Raether told me. "It's like performing. You know you're always going to get laughs." Raether takes a black leather swivel chair near Abbott, and the rest of his group belly up to the big table. They are beating the line "The whole time at the therapist's office, Fred just sat there like a bump on a log." Raether's first option draws a dead silence; undaunted, he launches into his second: "Roseanne says, 'Well, maybe you should have sent him to a tree surgeon.' "

"Oh, my God," says Gilliland.

Raether looks up from his pages. "We knew that one wouldn't—"

Gilliland cuts in, "I appreciate the joke of it."

Raether tries another: " 'Fred just sat there like a deer in headlights.' 'Well, all I can say, Jackie, is buckle up and hit the gas.' "

After a few more options, Gilliland stops him. "O.K. Those are good offers. We got enough here. We'll take the deer-in-headlights joke."

Next is the broken mold joke, which earns a "very funny" from Gilliland. The team is excused; another cadre enters. "Pitchy-poo," says Trogdon, and the process resumes. Afterward, the Big Room continues its weeding. There are setups to be clarified, lines to be cut. Gilliland is a patient man with a baby face and a permanently forlorn look. His idea of a good time is to listen to a Cubs game and read the paper in his garden on his day off. "The big trick in writing is to keep Roseanne herself separate from Roseanne Conner," Gilliland says. "I think Roseanne is more daunting. Roseanne Conner is more lovable—strong but wise, good, fair, and just."

On a break, Gilliland goes into the writers' snack room, which has shelves overflowing with M&M's, Pop-Tarts, Raisinets, Twix, and Starburst, and an icebox full of soda—enough sugar to keep the writers in orbit for weeks. A producer and her ten-year-old daughter come in, and the little girl ogles the candy like Pinocchio at the fair. She makes a beeline for the M&M's. "She thinks this is life," her mother says.

"If this isn't life," Gilliland says, "I'm screwed."

"WEDNESDAY is a low-energy day, because the actors don't want to give out before a performance," says Raether, standing outside the bungalow where he and his posse are taking a break from the morning's rewrites. "Usually, on Wednesday, the Big Room is working on next week's script."

"The Big Room," Berry says. "The power that goes on there is almost addictive."

"Yeah," Raether says. "Because you're around very interesting people. Five or six standups for fourteen hours a day. Really, really funny."

Bill Walker leans out a window near the Big Room. "She just yelled she wants a hundred jokes per page!" he shouts. The doors of the other bungalows open. "Ten jokes per comic per scene!" The words are repeated and passed on, and then the writers, like firemen responding to a station-house alarm, emerge from their rooms. They know the drill. They head for the main office and cluster around a TV monitor that is hooked up to the soundstage and trained on Roseanne. Big Mama is watching them, and she is not pleased. "I want it in an hour," Roseanne growls into the camera's eye. On second thought, she wants them front and center at Stage 2: "Now!"

Later, the standups are asked to Roseanne's trailer to pitch their options directly to her. "I guess it's like going to the principal's office," Roseanne says. "But they're excited. That's why I brought 'em down and let 'em sit there for two hours before they went into my room. I have to baby them along; and when you baby 'em along you get good things."

When the writers emerge forty minutes later, Raether says, "As I'm walking to the trailer, I'm thinking, This is the worst person in the world. But afterward I'm thinking, She's a riot. What a fun person. She started laughing at the glazed-ham joke. She could not stop laughing."

"Jackie accuses Roseanne of being bossy," Berry explains. "And her comeback is 'Bossy! Is a farmer who turns a pig into a glazed ham bossy?' "

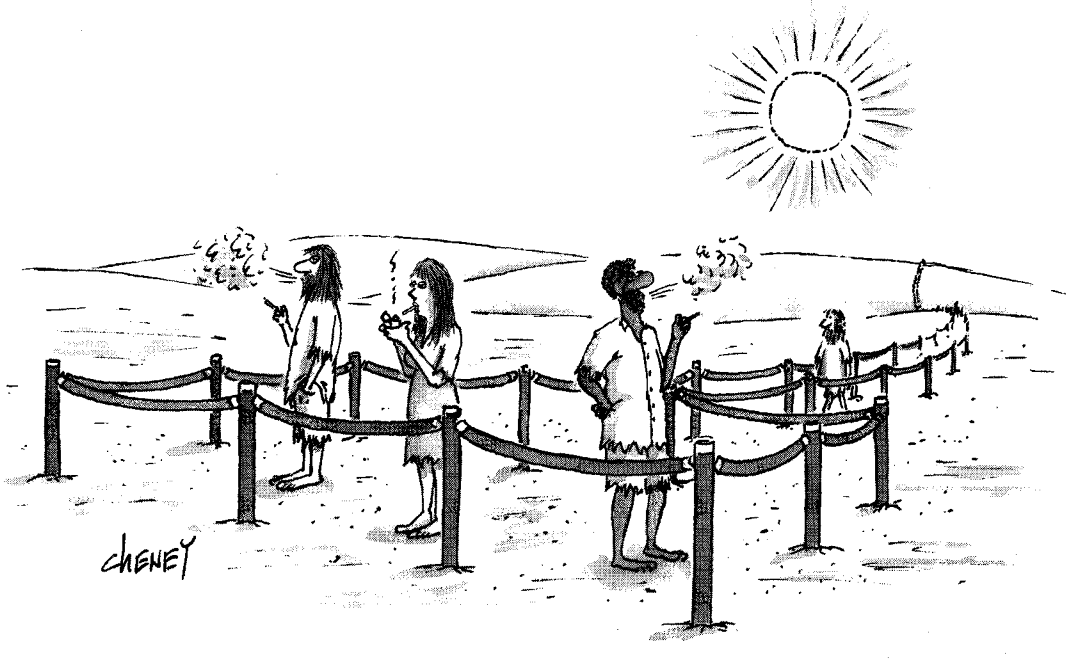
"She's laughing," Raether says. "We're all laughing. It just seemed like the funniest possible joke."

"That's the way it should be," Stephan says. "You have her immediate reaction. It's a better system than her sending notes and notes coming back to her. That way, she never sees the choices."

"She worked on words with us," Berry says. "We had a great time."

ON the day of the taping, everything broadcasts Roseanne's sovereignty. Each friend or special guest who enters the studio is tagged with a royal-blue wristband saying "Roseanne" and "Void if removed from wrist." A dozen or so stony-faced enforcers in suits rim the playing area and Roseanne's dressing room. Although Roseanne is easy with the actors during rehearsals and perky with DeGeneres and Stone for their photo opportunities together, there is nothing rollicking or accessible about her today. "Before I perform, I cast a circle—a magic circle—around myself," she says. Its mojo is palpable. She gives no eye contact, makes no gestures of acknowledgment, moves to her own beat. With one exception: when Stephan arrives, Roseanne recounts the morning's victory over a reporter, explaining, "I said to him, 'It's way better around here since we got rid of His Highness King Shit' "—Tom Arnold. "And then he asks, 'Are you upset that they're moving you to Wednesdays at eight?' And I go, 'They can move it to eight, they can move it to nine, or they can shove it up their ass for all I care. I'm getting paid the same.' I loved it. It was real fun. I got some great lines off about Rob gettin' fired. He goes, 'Did you bring in somebody else?' 'Nope,' I go. 'This is a blue-collar show. We fire from the top, not like white-collar shows, where they fire from the bottom.' "

About half an hour before showtime,



the audience files in and the writers assemble near a soundproof booth just above the bleachers. They have their own monitor to watch. Broch, the original author of the episode, is there with his fiancée; Berry brings his two towheaded children; Walker arrives with a friend. Renee Kurtz, an ABC executive, and Raether, Abbott, Trogdon, and the others all cram into the booth, too.

The opening of the show sails along on wave after wave of laughter. In Roseanne's fourteen speeches there are eleven jokes, and all of them score. "I liked that scene," Raether says, applauding. "Especially my work." But in the next scene, when Dan and Roseanne argue about whether D.J. should be allowed to go to the lake with Lisa, Raether can be heard bleating, "Aaargh!" Roseanne has muffed a joke and won't reshoot it. "Screw it," she says. "It's gone." The audience cheers Roseanne's outburst, but inside the booth the writers seethe.

"Another brilliant, well-thought-out editorial decision," says Abbott from the back.

But soon there's joy in the room again as the audience howls at DeGeneres's psychotherapist scene.

"She's trimmed some stuff out of here," Abbott says.

Miriam Trogdon looks at him. "Who did?"

"Who do you think?"

The big charge for the writers in the second act is watching Roseanne's glazed-ham joke bomb.

"We worked on her all day trying to take that thing away from her," says Tim Doyle, another producer-writer.

"She picked *that* one?" Trogdon asks.

But all is forgiven when Roseanne makes the line about "chocolate air" sing. The audience rocks with laughter, and someone says to Trogdon, who coined it, "That's a great line. Major."

"I love hearing the writers in the room—'That's mine.' 'That's mine,' " Renee Kurtz says.

"At home, I say it for nearly all the jokes," Berry says. "My daughter goes, 'Daddy, how do I know which ones are yours?' I say, 'The ones that you're laughing at, those are mine. The others are Danny Zuker's.' "

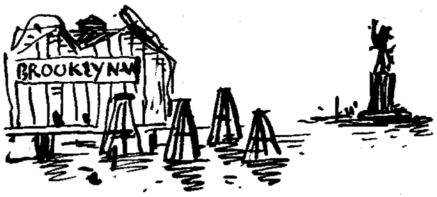
At the post mortem in the writers' booth, Broch is hugged by his fiancée, Berry is hugged by his daughter, and Walker hugs his script. "She can make anything work," he says. "She can make a straight line funny. Just her behavior."

Roseanne moves briefly among the cast and crew, then unceremoniously disappears. The comic fireworks that the writers have planned all week are a kind of Roman candle that dazzles and dies too soon. Some of them wander over to the Canyon Restaurant's bar to savor their victories and mourn their losses before they begin to climb next week's mountain.

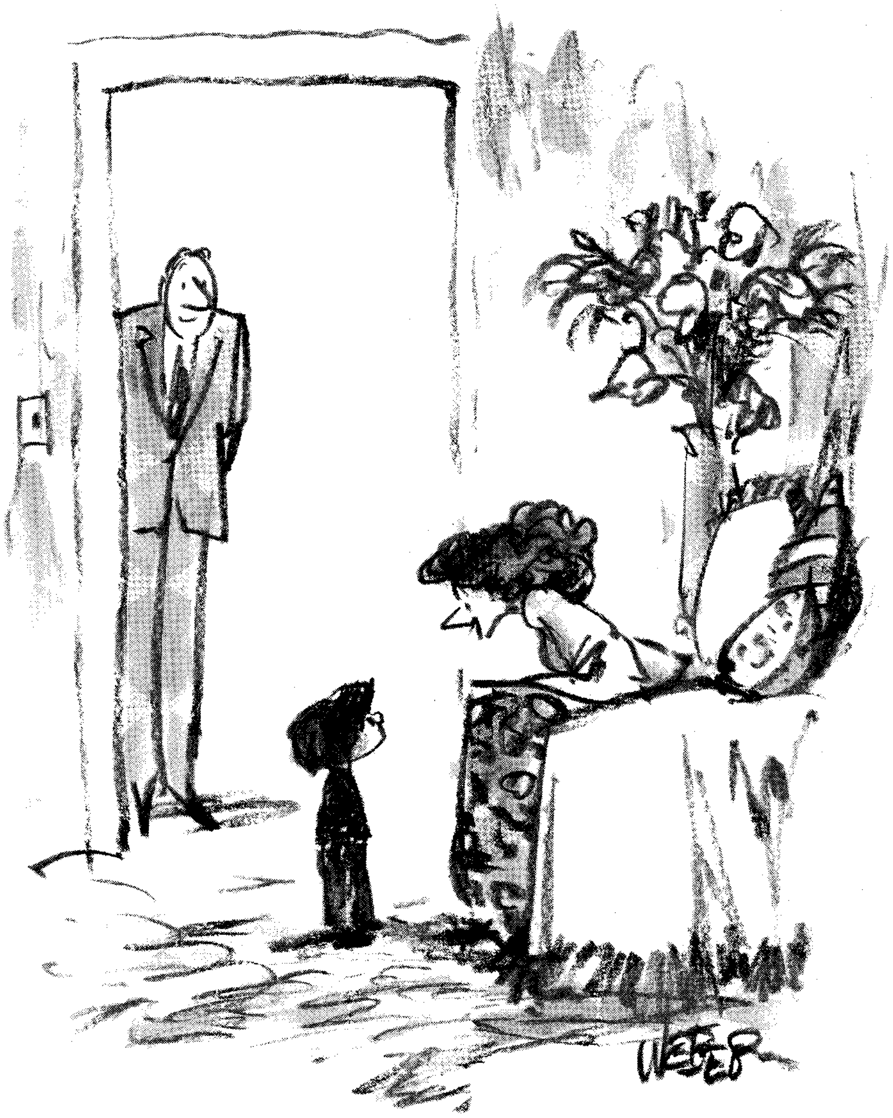
"You hate all the intimidation and all the mental games she puts you through," Abbott says. "But I will say one thing. The reason the show's been good over the years is because the writers are afraid to bring crap to the table. You watch the head writers go, 'We got to get something better here.' They're afraid to bring a joke that's anything less than the best you can get." He goes on, "When I leave at the end of the year, I'm really going to be sad. It will be kind of closing the door on a piece of television history. She's one of a kind."

"ALL I do is read about serial killers," Roseanne says four days later, seated in the parlor of her Brentwood Hills house, a huge Alpine-Tudor-style chalet. (She has essentially turned this house over to her kids; she and Ben Thomas live in a smaller, adjacent white brick house.) "Every book I have is about serial killers and abnormal psychology. That's where I get my comedy." She glances up at a gallery overlooking the parlor. With its dark wood beams and mottled light filtering through the surrounding trees, the room has a shadowy, brooding aura that fits Roseanne's mood. She continues, "When everything is corrupt and filthy and brutal and psychotic, you will be, too. And that will be considered normal. That's what I find funny. The things that are normal are horrific and horrifying to me."

By her own admission, Roseanne has a "criminal mentality." She says, "If I hadn't found comedy, I'd probably be out killing people." When her jokes score, she says, they "kill." And she prefers to be called "killer bitch" rather than "feminist." Roseanne says, "It's like this: I gave birth to ya, and I can take ya out, too. I think that's what makes me a bit different from other women. Because I'll beat the shit out of them, and not just verbally. I'm not opposed to violence. In fact, I think it's great. I think women should be more violent, kill more of their husbands. I like the fight. If people are comin' at you, you don't just sit there and lay down and go, 'Oh, bless you.' That's not in the human arsenal. To say that women should do that is to say women aren't human."



The warrior spectacle that Roseanne makes of herself in Hollywood, she explains, is meant to call into question the supremacy of middle-class liberal women like Jodie Foster, Susan Sarandon, and Meryl Streep, all of whom Roseanne considers "talented and fuckin' deluded." She says, "They don't have any subtext to anything they say. They're all just upset about salaries, or something that feminism was about twenty-five years ago. They're rewarded for making the women's movement appear to be lost in time. And they don't even know it. I want them to shut the fuck up and get out of the way of the real women that are doin' something. I'd like to see 'em go down to goddam South Central and talk to those women. Let's hear what they have to say about violence in America. Let's not hear from Jodie Foster, for chrissake!" Roseanne continues, "These type of women are just translators. And they are, in effect, castrated females—excuse me, but that's what they are. They're just too middle-class white." Once Roseanne reaches a certain threshold of anger, her mood lifts; her voice and body become animated. "Jodie Foster," Roseanne says, her eyes aglitter. "I hate everything she stands for, and everyone gathered around her to help her stand for it. It's a big fat fuckin' lie. Let's not be who we are. Let's hide behind our art. ('Nell'... I gotta do 'Nell' onstage sometime.) Let's oppress everybody who is exactly like us. Make it even harder for them to be who they are. In her fuckin' Armani with her tits hangin' out. And constantly rewarded and rewarded. And by who? The power structure that she totally speaks for."



"Sweetheart, Scott and I want you to be our best man."

For a Carnegie Hall appearance Roseanne plans to do next February, she wants to open with a screen image of Streep, Foster, and Sarandon which dissolves into her singing "Streetwalker Blues." She giggles at the thought of it. "It's a horrible song," she says, and, naturally, begins to sing:

> I've got nipples on my titties
> Big around as both my thumbs
> I've got somethin' between my legs
> That makes a dead man come.

The script for the new act is a neatly typed pile of ideas, which is stashed in a large mahogany desk in the main house. Roseanne has another office and another big desk in an outbuilding on the premises. Both are calm, well-ordered spaces, dominated by tanks of exotic tropical fish. Roseanne will take six months to write and refine the material. She pulls out a page and reads, "It's not like in fairy tales; most guys are pigs. Like where the prince kisses the princess and she wakes up. Hey, in real life most guys, even if she didn't wake up, they'd still fuck her." Roseanne laughs. "It's so mean. I like it when it's mean," she says. "You want to get people moved or pissed, or something. Feel something. I like it when guys scream back at me, 'Bullshit, Roseanne!' "

Maybe because her lawyer will soon be arriving to discuss fallout from her divorce, or maybe because her rant against the actresses has tapped into Roseanne's bottomless reservoir of anger, she pulls out a section called "Tom Arnold." "I'm on a gag order. I can't say nothin' about him," she says, and fixes me with a glance. "But I can tell jokes." She sits down in her upholstered swivel chair. "Like this one: When you get married, all you hear is 'I'm the man. I wear the pants. I'm the man, I'll make all the decisions.' Yeah—till the divorce. 'What am I gonna do? How will I survive? I have to live the way I was accustomed.' How much do you need to have a shitty studio apartment with orange shag carpet that smells like piss, man? How much do you need for that? To have shelves made out of bricks you stole, and beer and pizza in your fridge? How much do you need to keep your stale water in your bong? That's what you were accustomed to, man. Fuck you, get a job. How're you gonna live? Just like before. Like a fuckin' pig. Sell stories to the *Enquirer*, like you used to. Put on your fuckin' Iowa sweatshirt and get fuckin' to it."

Later, in her other office, part of which is now an art studio, Roseanne pulls a big cardboard box out of a cupboard and sits cross-legged on the floor to pick through the flotsam and jetsam of fifteen years of hectic life: jottings on menus and in manuscript, "Roseanne" scripts and character sketches, and feminist feuilletons like "Big Mama Rag," "Celtic Healing Goddesses," and "Points of Unity"—the last a detailed document Roseanne wrote for the Woman to Woman bookstore. One of her earliest joke ideas, with "Write this up as a big story" scrawled across it, goes like this: "Boys like a good listener. Boys like to win at games. Boys like to think they're smarter than you. Boys don't respect a girl who gives in to them, so you go around practicing virginal behavior: being docile, being quiet, a gracious loser. But that's only till you get a man. Then you must start being the real you, if you ever were, and spend all your time trying to change him from someone who'd want to live with a stupid loser with no sex drive." Roseanne chuckles to herself as she reads.

"That's a hard thing to say."

"Yeah," she says. "But it's true."

Roseanne fishes out the mimeographed program she wrote for her comedy protest Take Back the Mike. Her bio reads, "Roseanne Barr—Person of Ceremonies: an adorably angry/vicious comic, wife of ten years, mother of three, affectionately referred to as 'castrating bitch' by many male colleagues." Pages of scribbled notions from the early eighties are churned up, a kind of grab bag of griefs being willed into good times:

- I have a song in my heart: Schubert's death waltz.
- My husband's given me the best years of his life. '76 and '77.
- I undress to motivational tapes.
- If you can't say something nice, I would probably like you.
- "Dance as though you're making love." "You mean you want me to go off and dance alone."

Roseanne rummages for a while, then pushes herself up and finds a chair. "While I'm alive on this earth, I'm going to create my own reality," she says. "I'm not gonna fit it around me. I'm not gonna cut myself anymore to fit theirs. That's in all things I do, including my language."

After next year, when "Roseanne" goes off the air, she will be at large. "I know I have bigger things to do besides this," she says. She has joked about running for President. ("We need new blood in the White House—every twenty-eight days.") Her millions, as she says, "don't make me vote any different, they don't make me dress any better," but they do give her clout. She has a ten-year plan: she sees herself as a children's-rights advocate, and she is talking about setting up a foundation. "I feel that because I got all this I'm supposed to do that," she says. "That's the tradeoff." She also fancies herself a TV mogul. Roseanne plans to either own a network or align herself with one, to program shows that "only empower women." She tells me, "It may appear like a pipe dream now, but you should keep the quote for when I do own a network, and then you can say I said so in '95."

Whatever happens, Roseanne's greatest achievement has been her own salvation. "*God, freeze the family hands, lips, the thousand diseases of us this time, in this generation,*" she prays at the end of "My Lives." "*Spare me my grandchildren—as you have spared me.*" When I ask Roseanne why she wants another child, she says, "I want to keep doing it until I get it a hundred per cent right." She feels she has destroyed the neurotic family pattern that made her who she is. And if that has indeed come to pass, then the blessings of her life and her laughter have been engineered by the same fierce principle: without a killing, no feast. Roseanne stares at the battered cardboard box. "It's amazing that I got away with it, isn't it?" she says. ♦

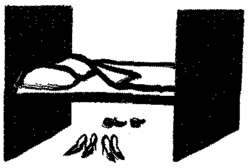
Roseanne with Carrie Fisher, who may play the lead in "AbFab." Most wo

ollywood "are just upset about salaries, or something that feminism was about twenty-five years ago," Roseanne says.

FICTION

EXPERIMENT

BY JULIAN BARNES



HIS story didn't always begin in the same way. In the preferred version, my Uncle Freddy was in Paris on business, travelling for a firm that produced authentic wax polish. He went into a bar and ordered a glass of white wine. The man standing next to him asked what his area of activity was, and he replied, "*Cire réaliste.*"

But I also heard my uncle tell it differently. For instance, he had been taken to Paris by a rich patron to act as navigator in a motor rally. The stranger in the bar (we are now at the Ritz, by the way) was refined and haughty, so my uncle's French duly rose to the occasion. Asked his purpose in the city, he replied, "*Je suis, sire, rallyiste.*" In a third, and it seemed to me most implausible, version—but then the quotidian is often preposterous, and so the preposterous may in return be plausible—the white wine in front of my uncle was a Reuilly. This, he would explain, came from a small appellation in the Loire, and was not unlike Sancerre in style. My uncle was new to Paris, and had already ingested several glasses (the location having shifted to a *petit zinc* in the *quartier latin*), so that when the stranger (who this time was not haughty) asked what he was drinking, he felt that panic which occurs when a foreign idiom escapes the mind, and the further panic when an English expression is desperately translated. The idiomatic model he chose was "I'm on the beer," and so he said, "*Je suis sur Reuillys.*" Once, when I rebuked my uncle for the contradictoriness of his memories, he gave a contented little smile. "Marvellous, the subconscious, isn't it?" he replied. "So inventive."

If the neighboring drinker came in several physical forms, he likewise introduced himself variously as Tanguy, Prévert, Duhamel, and Unik; once, even as Breton himself. We can, at least, be sure of the date of this evanescent encounter: March, 1928. Further, my Uncle Freddy, as even the most cautious commentators have agreed, is—was—none other than the mildly disguised "T.F." who appears in Session 5(a) of the Surrealist group's famously un-Platonic dialogues about sex. The transcript of this session was published for the first time in 1990, as an appendix to "Recherches sur la Sexualité, Janvier 1928–Août 1932." The notes state that my uncle was almost certainly introduced to the group by Pierre Unik and that "T.F.," contrary to the subsequent meanderings of his subconscious, was actually in Paris on holiday.

We shouldn't be too skeptical about my uncle's undeserved entrée to the Surrealist circle. They did, after all, admit occasional outsiders—a defrocked priest, a passing vagabond—to their discussions. And perhaps they thought a twenty-nine-year-old Englishman of conventional appearance, brought to them by a linguistic misunderstanding, might usefully broaden their terms of reference. My uncle was fond of attributing his permitted presence to the French dictum that within every lawyer there lurks the remnants of a poet. I am not of either world, you understand (and neither was my uncle). Is this piece of wisdom any truer than its opposite: that within every poet there lurks the remnants of a lawyer?

Uncle Freddy maintained that the session he attended took place in the apartment of the man he met in the bar, which limits it to five possible locations. There were about a dozen participants according to my uncle; nine according to the "Recherches." I should make it clear that since Session 5(a) was not published until 1990, and my uncle died in 1985, he was only ever faced with self-inflicted inconsistencies. Further, the tale of Uncle Freddy and the Surrealists was strictly for the smoking room, where narrative libertarianism was more acceptable. After swearing listeners never to mention it to Aunt Kate, he would enlarge on the frank licentiousness of what had taken place back in 1928. At times, he would claim to have been shocked, and maintain that he had heard more filth in one evening among Parisian intellectuals than he had in three years of barrack-room life during the last war. At others, his self-presentation was as the English man-about-town, the card, the dandy, all too willing to pass on a few tips, a few handy refinements of technique, to this gathering of Frenchmen whose cerebral intensity, in his view, hampered their normal sensual responses.

The published Session, needless to say, confirms neither version. Those who have read the "Recherches" will be familiar with its strange mixture of pseudoscientific inquiry and frank subjective response. The truth is that everyone talks about sex in a different way, just as everyone, we naturally assume, does it in a different way. André Breton, animator of the group, is a lofty Socratic figure, austere and at times repellent ("I don't like anyone to caress me. I hate that"). The others are variously benign to cynical, self-mocking to boastful, candid to satirical. The dialogues are happily full of humor; occasionally of the unintended sort, inflicted by posterity's frigid judgment; but more often intended, issuing from a rueful acknowledgment of our human frailty. In the third Session, for instance, Breton is catechizing his four male companions about whether they would allow a woman to touch their sex when it was not erect. Marcel Noll replies that he hates it. Benjamin Péret says that if a woman did that to him, he would feel diminished. Breton agrees: "diminished" is exactly the right word for how he would feel. To which Louis Aragon rejoins, "If a woman touched my sex only when it was erect, it wouldn't get that way very often."

I am straying from the point. I'm probably also trying to put off the admission that my uncle's participation in Session 5(a) is for most of its extent frankly disappointing. Perhaps there was a false democracy in the assumption that an Englishman picked up in a bar be-

FILIP PAGOWSKI

cause of a verbal mistake would have important testimony to offer this probing tribunal. "T.F." is asked many of the usual questions: under what conditions he prefers to have sex; how he lost his virginity; whether and how he can tell if a woman has reached orgasm; how many people he has had sexual relations with; how recently he has masturbated; how many times in succession he is capable of orgasm; and so on. I shall not bother to relate my uncle's responses, because they are either banal or, I suspect, not wholly truthful. When asked by Breton the characteristically compendious question "Apart from ejaculating in the vagina, mouth, or anus, where do you like to ejaculate in order of preference: 1) Armpit 2) Between the breasts 3) On the stomach?" Uncle Freddy answers—and here I have to retranslate from the French, so do not offer these as his exact words—"Is the cupped palm permitted?" Quizzed about which sexual position he prefers, my uncle replies that he likes to be lying on his back, with the woman sitting on top of him. "Ah," says Benjamin Péret, "the so-called 'lazy position.' "

My uncle is then interrogated about the British propensity for sodomy, about which he is defensive, until it transpires that homosexuality is not the topic but, rather, sodomy between men and women. Then my uncle is baffled. "I have never done it," he replies, "and I have never heard of anyone doing it." "But do you dream of doing it?" asks Breton. "I have never dreamed of doing it," T.F. doggedly responds. "Have you ever dreamed of fucking a nun in a church?" is Breton's next question. "No, never." "What about a priest or a monk?" asks Queneau. "No, not that either" is the reply.

I am not surprised that Session 5(a) is relegated to an appendix. The interrogators and fellow-confessors are in a lethargic or routine mood, while the surprise witness keeps pleading the Fifth. Then, toward the end of the evening, there comes a moment when the Englishman's presence seems briefly justified. I feel I should at this point give the transcript in full:

ANDRÉ BRETON: What is your opinion of love?

T.F.: When two people get married . . .

ANDRÉ BRETON: No, no, no! The word "marriage" is anti-Surrealist.

JEAN BALDENSPERGER: What about sexual relations with animals?

T.F.: What do you mean?

JEAN BALDENSPERGER: Sheep. Donkeys.

T.F.: There are very few donkeys in Ealing. We had a pet rabbit.

JEAN BALDENSPERGER: Did you have relations with the rabbit?

T.F.: No.

JEAN BALDENSPERGER: Did you dream of having relations with the rabbit?

T.F.: No.

ANDRÉ BRETON: I cannot believe that your sexual life can possibly be as empty of imagination and Surrealism as you make it appear.

JACQUES PRÉVERT: Can you describe to us the principal differences between sexual relations with an Englishwoman and those with a Frenchwoman?

T.F.: I only arrived in France yesterday.

JACQUES PRÉVERT: Are you frigid? No, do not take offense. I am not serious.

T.F.: Perhaps I can make a contribution by describing something I used to dream about.

JEAN BALDENSPERGER: To do with donkeys?

T.F.: No. There used to be a pair of twin sisters in my street.

JEAN BALDENSPERGER: You wanted to have sexual relations with both of them at the same time?

RAYMOND QUENEAU: How old were they? Were they young girls?

PIERRE UNIK: You are excited by lesbianism? You like to watch women caress one another?

ANDRÉ BRETON: Please, gentlemen, let our guest speak. I know we are Surrealists, but this is chaos.

T.F.: I used to look at these twin sisters, who were in all visible respects identical, and ask how far that identity continued.

ANDRÉ BRETON: You mean, if you were having sexual relations with one, how could you tell it was she and not the other?

T.F.: Exactly. At the beginning. And this in turn provoked a further question. What if there were two people—women who in their . . .

ANDRÉ BRETON: In their sexual movements . . .

T.F.: In their sexual movements were exactly the same, and yet in all other respects were completely different.

PIERRE UNIK: Erotic doppelgängers yet social disparates.

ANDRÉ BRETON: Precisely. That is a valuable contribution. Even, if I may say so to our English guest, a quasi-Surrealist contribution.

JACQUES PRÉVERT: So you have not yet been in bed with a Frenchwoman?

T.F.: I told you, I arrived yesterday.

This is the end of Uncle Freddy's documented participation in Session 5(a), which then returned to matters such as the distinction between orgasm and ejaculation, and the relation between dreams and masturbatory desire. My uncle evidently had little to contribute on these subjects.

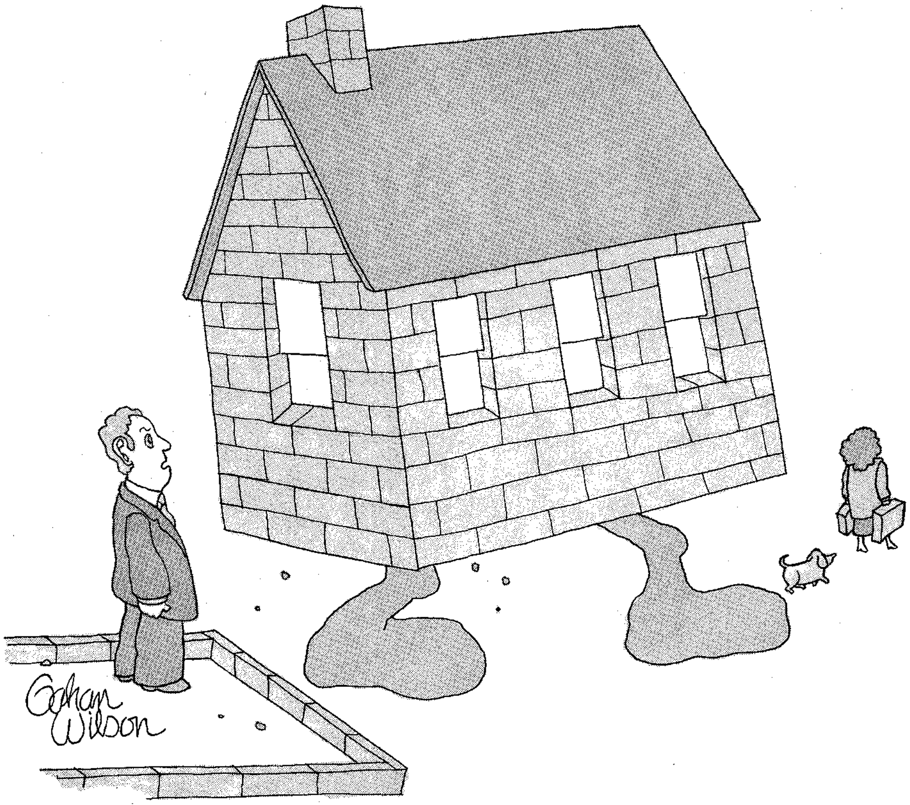
I HAD, of course, no suspicion of this future corroboration when I saw my uncle for the last time. This was in November of 1984. Aunt Kate was dead by then, and my visits to "T.F." (as I am inclined to think of him nowadays) had become increasingly dutiful. Nephews tend to prefer aunts to uncles. Aunt Kate was dreamy and indulgent; there was something gauzy-scarved and secretive about her. Uncle Freddy was indecently foursquare; he seemed to have his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets even when wearing a two-piece suit. His stance, both moral and physical, had the bullying implication that he truly understood what manhood consisted of, that his generation had miraculously caught the elusive balance between earlier repression and subsequent laxness, and that any deviation from this *beau idéal* was regrettable, if not actively perverse. As a result, I was never quite at ease with the future "T.F." He once announced that it was his avuncular responsibility to teach me about wine, but his pedantry and assertiveness put me off the subject until quite recently.

It had become a routine after Aunt Kate's death that I would take Uncle Freddy out to dinner on his birthday, and that afterward we would return to his flat, off the Cromwell Road, and drink ourselves stupid. The consequences mattered little to him; but I had my patients to think of, and would annually try to avoid getting as drunk as I had the previous year. I can't say I ever succeeded, because though each year my resolution was stronger, so was the countervailing force of my uncle's tediousness. In my experience, there are various good but lesser motives—guilt, fear, misery, happiness—for indulging in a certain excess of drink, and one larger motive for indulging in a great excess: boredom. At one time I knew a clever alcoholic who insisted that he drank because things then happened to him such as never did when he was sober. I half believed him, though to my mind drink does not really make things happen, it simply helps you bear the pain of things not happening. For instance, the pain of my uncle being exceptionally boring on his birthdays.

The ice would fissure as it hit the whiskey, the casing of the gas fire would clunk, Uncle Freddy would light what he claimed was his annual cigar, and the conversation would turn yet again to what I now think of as Session 5 (a).

"So remind me, Uncle, what you were really doing in Paris."

"Trying to make ends meet. What all



"Not you, too!"

• •

young men do." We were on our second half bottle of whiskey; a third would be required before a welcome enough form of anesthesia developed. "Task of the male throughout history, wouldn't you say?"

"And did you?"

"Did I what?"

"Make ends meet?"

"You've a filthy mind for one of your age," he said, with the sudden sideways aggression that liquor imparts.

"Chip off the old block, Uncle Freddy." I didn't, of course, mean it.

"Did I ever tell you . . ." and he was launched, if that verb doesn't give too vivid an impression of directness and purpose. This time he had again chosen to be in Paris as map reader and mechanic to some English milord.

"What sort of car was it? Just out of interest."

"Panhard," he answered sniffily. It always was a Panhard when he told this version. I used to divert myself by wondering whether such consistency on my uncle's part made this element of his story more likely to be true, or more likely to be false.

"And where did the rally go?"

"Up hill and down dale, my boy. Round and about. From one end of the land to the other."

"Trying to make ends meet."

"Wash your mouth out."

"Chip off the old . . ."

"So I was in this bar. . . ."

I caressed him with the questions he needed, until he reached the normal climax to his story, one of the few points at which he agreed with the subsequently published Session 5(a).

"So Fellow-me-lad says to me, 'Have you done it with a French lass yet?' and I say, 'Give us time, only got off the boat yesterday!' "

I would normally have feigned a run of dying chuckles, poured some more Scotch, and waited for Uncle Freddy's next topic. This time, for some reason, I declined his ending.

"So did you?"

"Did I what?"

"Do it with a French lass?"

I was breaking the rules, and his reply was a kind of rebuke; or, at least, I took it as such. "Your Aunt Kate was as pure as driven snow," he announced with a hiccup. "The missing doesn't get any the less, you know, for all the years. I can't wait to join her."

"Never say die, Uncle Freddy." This is not the sort of expression I normally use. I practically added "Life in the old dog yet," such was the infectious, indeed pestiferous, influence of my uncle. Instead, I repeated, "So—did you do it with a French lass?"

"Thereby hangs a tale, my boy, and it's one I've never told a living soul." I think if I'd shown genuine interest at this point I might have scared him off, but I was slumped in the oppressive reflection that my uncle was not just an old bore but a parody of an old bore. Why didn't he strap on a peg leg and start capering round some inglenooked pub waving a clay pipe? "Thereby hangs a tale, and it's one I've never told a living soul." People don't say that anymore. Except my uncle just had.

"They fixed me up, you see."

"Who fixed you up?"

"The Surrealist boys. My newfound chums."

"You mean, they found you a job?"

"Are you stupid tonight or just normal? I'm not sure I can tell. They fixed me up with a woman. Well, two, to be precise."

I began to pay attention at this point. Needless to say, I did not believe my uncle. He was probably fed up with the lack of impact made by the umpteenth retelling of How I Met the Surrealists and had been working up some new embellishment.

"You see, in my considered opinion, those get-togethers . . . They all wanted to meet up and talk smut, but couldn't admit it, so they said there was some scientific purpose behind it all. Fact is, they weren't very good at talking smut. Inhibited, really, I suppose I'd say. Intellectuals. No fire in their veins, just ideas. Why, in my three years in the army . . ."

I will spare you this ritual diversion.

"So I could sense what they were after, but I wasn't going to provide it. Almost like betraying your country, talking smut to a group of foreigners. Unpatriotic, don't you think?"

"Never tried it, Uncle."

"Ha. You've got a tongue on you tonight. Never tried it. That was just like them, wanting to know what I'd never tried. Trouble with their sort is, if you say you've never wanted to do so-and-so, they don't believe you. In fact, just because you say you *don't* want to do so-and-so, they assume that deep down this is what you're bursting to do. Cockeyed, eh?"

"Could be."

"So I thought it incumbent upon me to raise the tone of the gathering. Don't laugh, I know what I'm saying. You wait till *you* find yourself sitting around with a lot of intellectuals all talking about John Thomas. So I said, here's one to think about. What if there were two lasses who made love in the same way. Exactly the same way, so that if you closed your eyes you couldn't tell the difference. Wouldn't that be a thing, I said. And with all their brains they hadn't turned up that conundrum before. It set them by the ears, I don't mind telling you."

I'm not surprised. It's one of those questions you tend not to ask. Neither about yourself (is there somebody else out there who does it in a way indistinguishable from me?), nor about others. In sex we note distinctiveness, not similarity. She/he is/was good/not so good/wonderful/bit boring/fakey, or whatever; but we don't as a rule think, Oh, being in bed with her was much like being in bed with So-and-So a couple of years ago. In fact, if I were to close my eyes . . . We don't, on the whole, think that way. Courtesy, in part, I expect; a desire to maintain the individuality of others. And perhaps a fear that if you do that to them, they might start thinking the same back about you.

"So my new chums fixed me up."

". . . ?"

"They wanted to thank me for my contribution to their discussions. Seeing as I'd been so useful. Chappie I'd met in the bar said he'd be in touch."

"Surely the rally was about to start, Uncle?" Well, it was hard to resist.

"The next day he turned up and said the group was offering me what he called a Surrealist gift. They were touched by the fact that I had not as yet enjoyed the favors of a French lass, and they were prepared to right this wrong."

"Remarkably generous." A remarkable fantasy is what I really thought.

"He said they'd booked a room for me at three o'clock the next afternoon in a hotel off Saint Sulpice. He said he'd be there, too. I thought this a bit strange, but, on the other hand, never look a gift horse and all that.

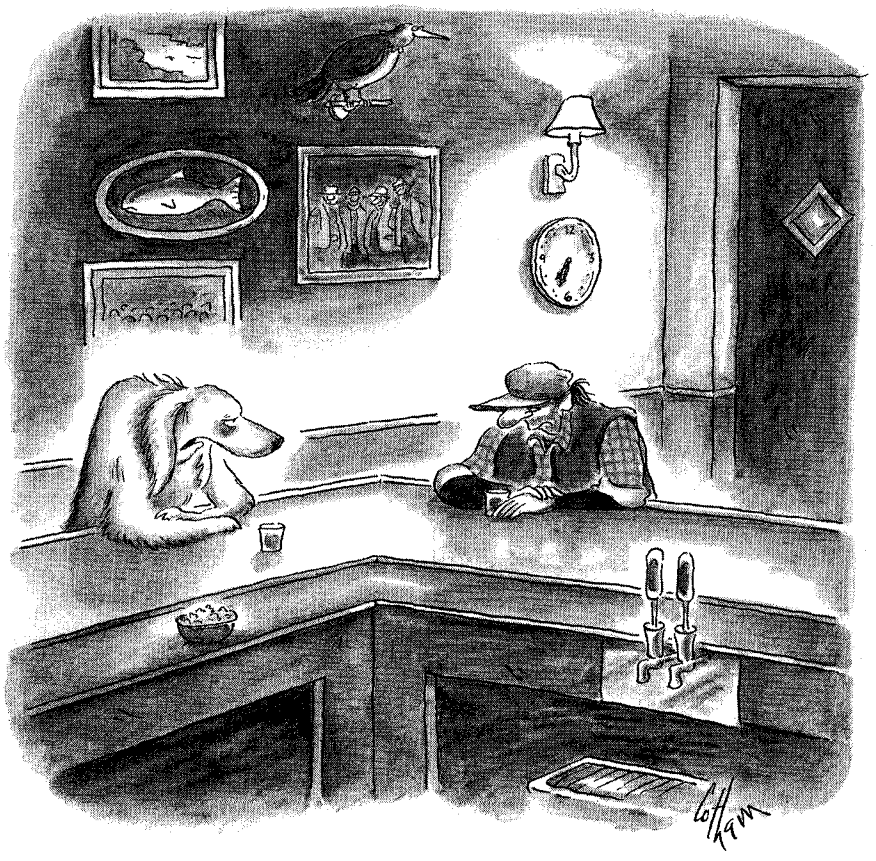
" 'What are you going to be there for?' I asked. 'I think I'm up to managing on my own.' So he explained the arrangement. They wanted me to take part in a test. They wanted to know if sex with a Frenchwoman was different from sex with an Englishwoman. I said why did they need me to help them find that out. They said they thought I'd have a more straightforward response. Meaning, I suppose, that I wouldn't sit around and think about it all the time like they would.

"I said, 'Let me get this straight. You want me to have a couple of hours with a French lass and then come round the next day and tell you what I thought of it?' 'No,' Chappie says. 'Not the next day, day after. The *next* day we've booked you the same room with another girl.' 'That's handsome,' I say. 'Two French lasses for the price of one.' 'Not quite,' he says. 'One of them is English. You have to tell which is which.' 'Well,' I say, 'I can tell that just by saying "*bonjour*" and looking at them.' 'That's why,' he says, 'you aren't allowed to say "*bonjour*" and you aren't allowed to look at them. I'll be there when you arrive and blindfold you, then I'll let the girl in. When she's gone and you hear the door shut, you can take the blindfold off. How do you feel about that?'

"How did I feel about that? Well, it was a bit of a surprise. I'd just been thinking, Don't look a gift horse in the mouth, and now it was a question of not looking *two* gift horses in the mouth, or anywhere else. How did I feel? Man to man, I felt like a couple of Christmases had come round at the same time. Part of me wasn't too partial to the blindfold business: though, man to man, another part of me rather was."

Isn't it pathetic how old men lie about the sex they had in earlier days? What could be more transparently an invention? Paris, youth, a woman, *two* women, a hotel room in the afternoon, all set up and paid for by someone else? Pull the other one, Uncle. Twenty minutes in an *hôtel de passe* with a rough hand towel and a subsequent dose of clap is more like it. Why do old men need this sort of comfort? And what banal scenarios they drool out to themselves. O.K., Uncle, fast-forward with the soft porn. We'll forget about navigating in the rally.

"So I said, Count me in. And then next afternoon I went to this hotel be-



"I've seen things a dog's not supposed to see."

hind Saint Sulpice. It came on to rain, and I had to run from the Métro station and got there in a muck sweat." This wasn't bad—I'd been expecting a brilliant spring day with accordionists serenading him through the Jardin du Luxembourg. "I got to the room, Chappie was there, took off my hat and coat. Wasn't planning to get starkers in front of mine host, as you might imagine. He said, 'Don't worry, she'll do the rest.' He just sat me down on the bed, wrapped this scarf around my head, knotted it twice, made me promise as an Englishman not to do any peeping, and left the room. A couple of minutes later, I heard the door open."

My uncle put down his whiskey, set his head back, and closed his eyes, closing them to remember something he had not in any case seen. Indulgently, I let him drag out the pause. At last, he said, "And then the next day. Again. Raining again, too."

The gas fire noisily held its breath, the ice cubes trilled promptingly in my glass. But Uncle Freddy didn't seem to want to continue. Or perhaps he'd really stopped. That wouldn't do. It was—how shall I put it?—like narrative cock-teasing.

"So?"

"So," my uncle repeated softly. "Just so."

We sat quietly for a minute or two until I couldn't avoid the question. "And what *was* the difference?"

Uncle Freddy put his head back, closed his eyes, and uttered a noise between a sigh and a whimper. Eventually, he said, "The French lass licked the raindrops from my face." He opened his eyes again, and showed me his tears.

I was strangely moved. I was also wearily suspicious, but this didn't stop me being moved. *The French lass licked the raindrops from my face.* I gave my uncle—whether plausible liar or sentimental remembrancer—the gift of my envy.

"You could tell?"

"Tell what?" He seemed half absent, being tweaked and tickled by his memories.

"Which one was English and which one was French?"

"Oh yes, I could tell."

"How?"

"How do you think?"

"Smell of garlic?"

He chuckled. "No. They both wore scent, as a matter of fact. Quite strong scent. Not the same, of course."

"So . . . they did different things? Or was it the way they did it?"

"Trade secret." Now he was beginning to look smug again.

"Come off it, Uncle Freddy."

"Always made it a rule never to snitch on my lady friends."

"Uncle Freddy, you never set eyes on them. They were provided for you. They weren't your lady friends."

"They were to me. Both of them. That's what they felt like. That's what I've always considered them."

This was exasperating, not least because I'd been drawn into giving credence to my uncle's fantasy. And what was the point of inventing a story and then withdrawing the key facts?

"But you can tell me, Uncle, because you told them."

"Them?"

"The group. You reported to them the next day."

"Well, an Englishman's word is his bond except when it isn't. You've lived long enough to know that. And besides . . . the truth is I had a feeling,

THEATRE OF PAIN

In the theatre of pain where all things are born
and brought into the light,
I found myself one night, the world contracting
to a dream of world, a nightmare ocean
I waded into, wave after wave knocking me down,
holding me in pain's undertow until I thought I'd drown.
And then a needle stopped the pain
and I was on an island where no wind blew
and no tree cast a shadow, where to feel nothing at all
was all I could desire. Somewhere a clock ticked madly
but time, for a little while, stood still
until, again, the pain broke through, all flash
and sear, and the moment slowly approached
when we would meet, meet for the first time.
With a final push you were born,
a fact engraved upon the world forever,
leaving the two of us half drowned and clinging to the shore,
hands dragging us back from the black water.
Through corridors of birth and death we were wheeled
to a high room overlooking the city, the rising sun
tinting the clouds, the empty stadium, pink and blue,
rush-hour traffic moving soundlessly down 33rd Street,
radios tuned to the morning news,
completely, most completely, unaware of you.
The shift was changing. Breakfast was being brought around.
Two nurses entered with a tray and news of the world
I'd left for a day and returned to, the paper singing
of death, only death, death in the face of life.
How often had they seen that scene before,
the common tableau of mother and sleeping newborn,
your face a perfect rose, so small, so royal?
But no, amazed, they bent over you,
lifting you high into the air,
carrying you with fanfare to the window,
streamers of light everywhere,
saying (I swear to God they said),
"Welcome to the World!"

—Elizabeth Spires

not so much the first time but more strongly the second, that I was being watched."

"Someone in the wardrobe?"

"I don't know. How, where. Just sensed it, somehow. It made me feel a bit grubby. And as I say, I made it a rule never to snitch on my lady friends. So I took the boat train home the next day."

Forgetting about the motor rally, or the career in authentic wax polish, or whatever else it might have been.

"And *that*," my uncle continued, "was the cleverest thing I ever did." He looked at me as if his whole story had been aimed at this moment. "Because that's where I met your Aunt Kate. On the boat train."

"I never knew that."

"No reason why you should. Engaged within the month, married within three."

A busy spring indeed. "And what did *she* think of your adventure?"

His face shut down again. "Your Aunt Kate was as pure as driven snow. I'd no more have talked about that than . . . pick my teeth in public."

"You never told her?"

"Never breathed a word. Anyway, imagine it from her side. She meets a likely fellow, gets a bit soft on him, asks what he's been up to in Paris, and he tells her he's been knocking off lasses at the rate of one a day after promising to go back afterwards and talk smut about them. She'd not be soft on him for long, would she?"

In my limited observation, Aunt Kate and Uncle Freddy, despite their different natures, had been a devoted couple. His grief at her death, even when exaggerated into melodrama by drink, had seemed quite genuine. The fact that he survived her by six years I attributed to no more than the enforced habit of living. Two months after this final birthday evening, he gave up that habit. The funeral was the usual sparse and awkward business: a Surrealist wreath with an obscene motif might have helped.

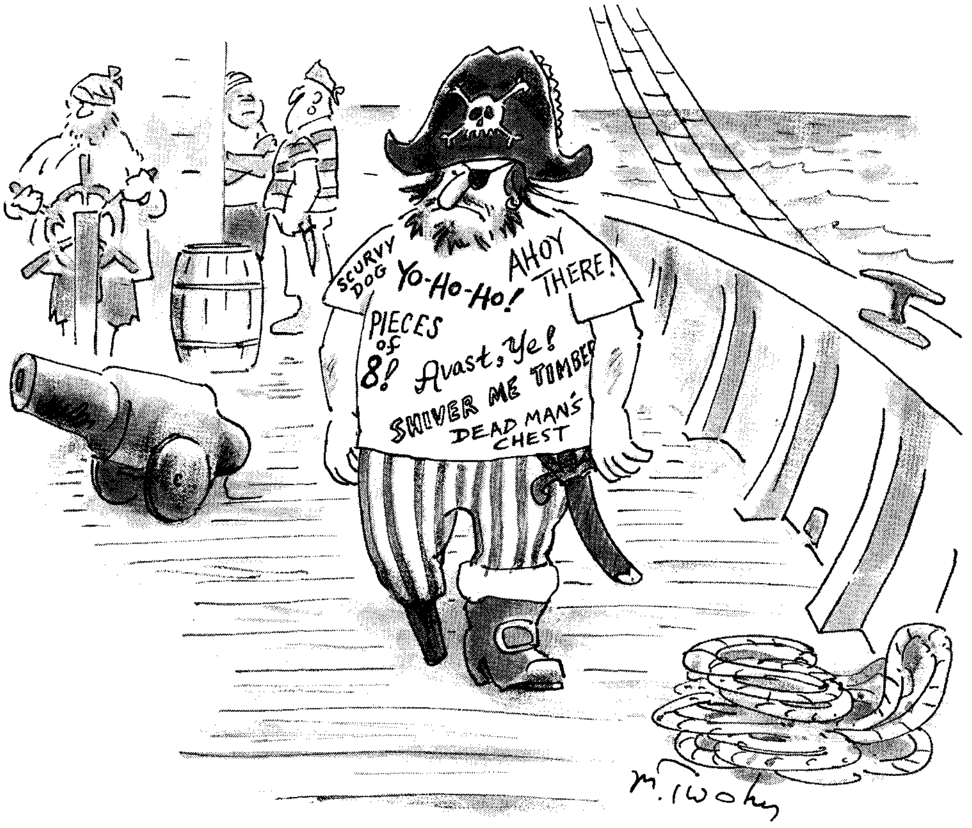
Five years later the "Recherches sur la Sexualité" appeared, and my uncle's story was partly corroborated. My curiosity and frustration were also revived; I was left staring at the same old questions. I resented the fact that my uncle had clammed up, leaving me with nothing but *The French lass licked the raindrops from my face.*

As I have mentioned, my uncle's encounter with the Surrealist group was relegated to a mere appendix. The "Recherches" are of course extensively annotated: preface, introduction, text, appendices, footnotes to text, footnotes to appendices, footnotes to footnotes. Probably I am the only person to have spotted something that is at most only of family interest. Footnote 23 to Session 5(a) states that the Englishman referred to as T.F. was on one occasion the subject of what is described as an "attempted vindication of Surrealist theory (cf. note 12 to Appendix VI)," but that no record of the results obtained has survived. Footnote 12 to Appendix VI describes these "attempted vindications" and mentions that in a few of them there was an Englishwoman involved. This woman is referred to simply as "K."

I have only two final reflections on the matter. The first is that when scientists employ volunteers to help with their research projects, they often withhold from these participants the true purpose of the test, for fear such knowledge might, wittingly or unwittingly, affect the purity of the process and the accuracy of the result.

The second thought came to me only quite recently. I may have mentioned that I take a novice interest in wine. I belong to a small group that meets twice a month: we each take along a bottle, and the wines are tasted blind. Usually we get them wrong, sometimes we get them right, though what is wrong and what is right in this matter is a complicated business. If a wine tastes to you like a young Australian Chardonnay, then that, in a sense, is what it is. The label may subsequently declare it to be an expensive Burgundy, but if it hasn't been that in your mouth, then that is what it can never truly become.

This isn't quite what I meant to say. I meant to say that a couple of weeks ago we had a guest tutor. She was a well-known Master of Wine, and she told us an interesting fact. Apparently if you take a magnum and decant it into two separate bottles and put them into a blind tasting, then it's extremely rare for even wily drinkers to guess that the wine in those two particular bottles is in fact the same one. People expect all the wines to be different, and their palates therefore insist that they are. She said it was a most revealing experiment, and that it almost always works. ♦

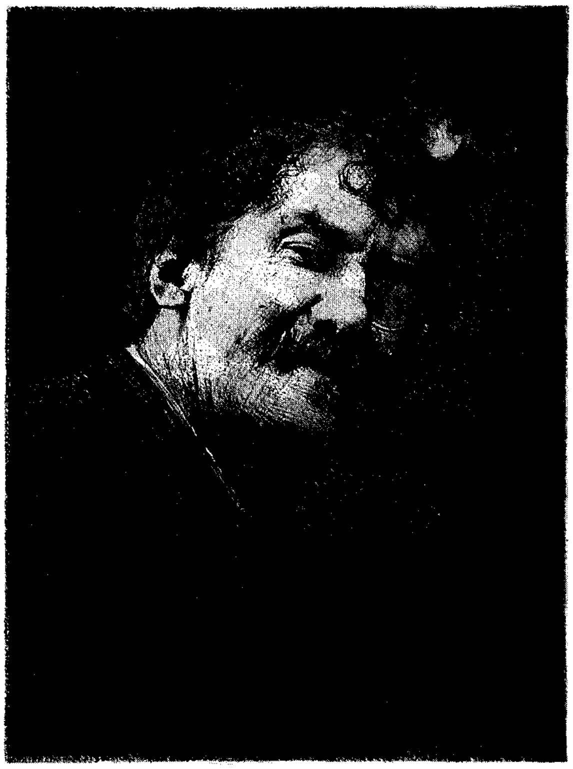

SCURVY DOG
Yo-Ho-Ho!
AHOY THERE!
PIECES of 8!
Avast, Ye!
SHIVER ME TIMBERS
DEAD MAN'S CHEST

THE ART WORLD

WHISTLER IN THE DARK

The artist was his own work of art, and he understood not only what it took to become a star but also how to use himself to get the picture.

BY ADAM GOPNIK



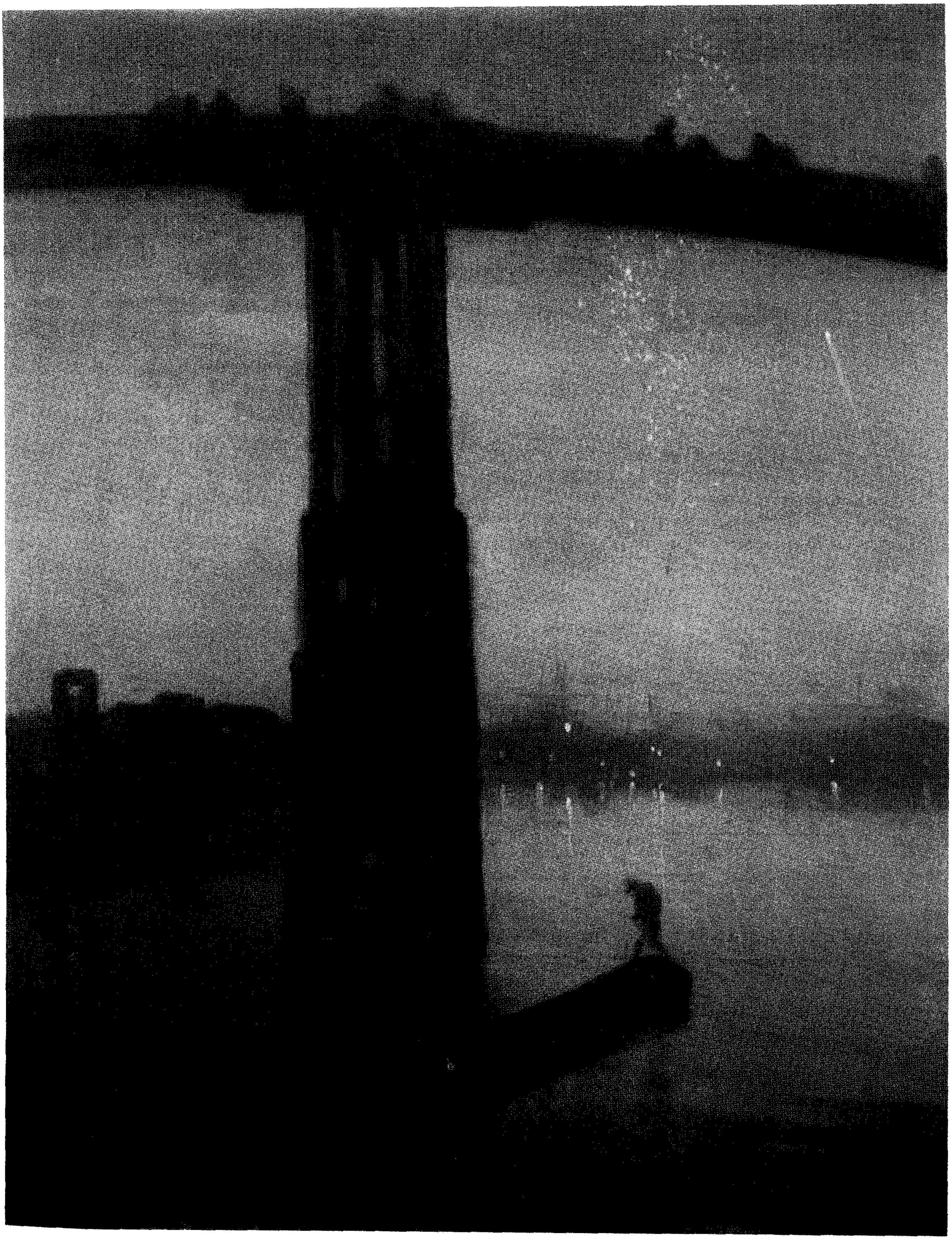
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

"YOU behave as though you have no talent," Degas once said reprovingly to his old friend the American painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler, meaning that he didn't understand why anyone who painted so well needed to show off so shamelessly. Degas, speaking in the eighteen-nineties, had in mind everything that Whistler had been doing since he left Paris for London, more than twenty years earlier. During that time, Whistler had become not just the first celebrity artist but in some respects the first celebrity anything—known for being known, even among people who had no idea why what he was known for mattered. Whistler had invented the first perpetual-self-promotion machine: he carried on heavily publicized feuds with other artists and writers for the benefit of the newspapers, once launched a libel suit against an art critic, even designed an elaborate and showy system of "Whistler frames." All that, Degas must have thought, was exactly the kind of thing you did only if you didn't really know what you were doing. And Whistler's practice of giving his pictures musical titles—calling them "arrangements" and "symphonies" and "nocturnes"—also must have struck Degas as the kind of depressing, look-at-me gimmick that you would find only among vulgar avant-gardists.

What Degas couldn't know, though, was something that Whistler knew in his bones: that he had no talent—none, anyway, in the sense that Degas meant. Walking through the big retrospective of Whistler's work at the National Gallery, in Washington, you may be amazed at all the simple things that Whistler couldn't do: he couldn't draw (the etcher William Rothenstein recalled his dismay at seeing how childishly Whistler sketched); he was limited by a penny-postcard, "Wish you were here" view of nature (he knew that it looked good at twilight and at dawn); and his sense of the figure seems to have been derived from two or three poses that he had taken from Greek reliefs, just as his sense of design came from a few banding devices—a zone of sky, a zone of ocean, and a little mixed-up zone between—that he had got from Japanese prints. He had a magpie's gift for appropriating the surface traits of other people's styles, but he couldn't *invent* anything to save his life. He didn't even have much taste, as those vast, fluted gold frames, which still encumber some of his loveliest pictures, continue to prove.

What he did have was a sense of style so assured that it could convince as good a judge as Degas that there must be something more going on underneath. There wasn't, but it didn't matter. Whistler's eye for fashion—his sense of why people dress the way they do, and why they stand the way they stand and hold the things they hold, and what all those things say about who they are and want to be—was so keen that it could sustain a career. Whistler had an unrivalled awareness of social poses and paraphernalia, and in his portraits he could communicate, in a fluent shorthand, exactly what they meant. So his behavior wasn't a distraction from his talent. It was exactly the talent he had. His self-dramatization was a necessary vice, like his disciple Proust's obsequiousness—a way of knocking on the drawing-room door to find out what was going on in there.

The show at the National Gallery won't travel to New York, and that has caused a bit of a stir. (It started at the Tate Gallery, in London, and appeared at the Musée d'Orsay, in Paris, before moving to Washington, where it will remain through August 20th.) It shouldn't. The only things that really matter about Whistler's career are his society portraits of the seventies, eighties, and nineties, and the best concentration of them is still at the Frick, here in New York. (Frick pictures never leave the Frick.) It's possible to leave the show feeling a little bemused on behalf of Whistler's French contemporaries; almost any picture by any one of them in the National Gallery's collection blows away Whistler's entire œuvre. Whistler doesn't belong in their company, and it does him no service to put him there. In hard fact, the nocturnes and the little near-abstract landscapes look surprisingly better in reproduction than they do on canvas. The paint surfaces are undernourished and, in any case,



Portrait of Whistler by Mortimer Menpes, c. 1900 (opposite), and "Nocturne: Blue and Gold—Old Battersea Bridge," 1872–77.

are intimidated by the scale of those gold frames.

But this is the National Gallery, and, in another sense, it's the right place for him after all. Few Americans can help feeling the kind of affection for Whistler that eventually passes over into love. He is in some ways the most American of artists, not least because he had to invent himself as an American while he was at a great distance from home. Although Whistler lived in London for most of his adult life, he never tried to "assimilate," in the manner of, say, Henry James. He remained almost a professional American. He gave pancake breakfasts at his house in Chelsea, ostentatiously used Americanisms like "I guess," and insisted that everybody call him Jimmy. Most of his London friends assumed that he was a Southerner, a son of the Old Dominion.

Not many of them knew that he had spent very little time in the United States. He was born in 1834, in the mill town of Lowell, Massachusetts. When his father, who was a Yankee engineer, went to work for the Russian government, he took his family, including nine-year-old Jimmy, to St. Petersburg, and there the boy learned to speak French and decided to be an artist. At fifteen, the young Whistler was sent back home: after two years of school in Connecticut, he spent three miserable years at West Point and then, after he was expelled, worked for a while in Baltimore and Washington. At twenty-one, he set out for Paris. And that was that; he never came back. For Whistler, America wasn't a country of the memory, like Nabokov's Russia. It was a country of the mind, like L. Frank Baum's Oz.

YET the idea of being American remained dear to him, because it enabled him to live in England as an outsider who was allowed inside. An insider, or a would-be insider, is supposed to act as if the social codes of clothes and style were so familiar to him that he hardly noticed them. Only an outsider can stare at them unapologetically and at length. Whistler cared more about the dresses and hats and head-turnings of the upper crust than it cared about such things itself. By maintaining a certain distance from his subjects, he could see them with a cartoon clarity that no insider would ever have been able to achieve. Whistler was the first American primitive of sophistication: a primitive of sophistication in the same way that Tom Wolfe, very much his spiritual descendant, is. Both depict the social landscape in flatter and brighter shapes than it actually possesses. And Whistler could pay attention to the details of social behavior while occasionally pretending to miss the point. In his late forties, he painted an aristocrat, Lady Archibald Campbell, in a provocative pose, peering back over her shoulder and baring her ankle. The family was appalled: this was the body language of a streetwalker looking for business. Whistler just played dumb.

During his first years in France, in the fifties, he hadn't quite figured out how to play the insider-outsider game, so he plunged into the art-world politics of Paris. With his quick intelligence, he saw that, of all the competing styles of French dissenting art, Courbet's realism was the one that could give people something to cry for. There were no wistful paupers in Courbet's pictures, as there were in so much conventional "realism." There was just peasant bread, peasant sexuality, and tough-as-nails pure painting. Whistler attached himself to Courbet, and they became close friends. The choice of idol was an example of Whistler's preference for social pose over painterly style, since Courbet, once you got past his role as a social agitator, was an almost impossible painter to use as a model. He was a virtuoso of the tactile; even his water looks like rocks. Whistler couldn't paint a rock to look like a rock; in fact, in 1861 he painted an entire picture of rocks, called "The Coast of Brittany (Alone with the Tide)," as if expressly to demonstrate this point. Whistler could be disarmingly honest, and he later confessed that he had liked the idea of being a Courbet-style realist much more than he ever liked realism. "It's that damned realism which made an *immediate* appeal to my vanity as a painter," he said.

He abruptly dropped Courbet's realism for his next enthusiasm, which was almost its opposite—a kind of dreamy Orientalism, inspired by the woodblock prints of the Japanese artists Hokusai and Utamaro. (The Freer Gallery, in Washington, has put together an exhibit devoted to Whistler and Japan.) But Whistler didn't really *get* Japanese prints. Hokusai's prints, in particular, were daring studies in perspective deformation; Whistler, because he insisted on reading them as flat, found in them only a system of simplified ornamental design—a kind of pretty decorative patterning—and he added that to friezelike arrangements he had already picked up from the Pre-Raphaelites.

Unable to invent an original style, he mixed up the two styles he knew. Combining a modified Courbet-like realism with a "Japanese" flatness, he exhibited, in 1863, at the famous Salon des Refusés, a picture that made his reputation. Called "The White Girl," it shows a red-headed young woman in a white dress, standing on a wolfskin rug. It is a portrait of Joanna Hiffernan, his lover, who was in some respects the first supermodel; everyone wanted to paint her, usually nude. In this picture, though, she's dressed like a Muslim bride: not an inch of flesh shows, save for her hands and face and beautiful long throat. The sexuality of the picture is concentrated in her long, loose, haloed, backlit red hair. The scandal that the picture created at the time—and it was almost as great as the scandal created by Manet's "Déjeuner sur l'Herbe," which hung nearby—was supposed to lie in its absence of a point. The painting, Whistler announced, was an arrangement of shapes—a study in white, as a piano sonata might be a study in F. The real scandal, I suspect, lay in the blank expression on Jo's face: in the combined quality of sexual knowledge and indifference to it that Whistler conveyed. Jo is clearly sexually "awakened," but the carnal, and presumably forbidden, experience has left her blank and emptied rather than wrought up. What worried people about "The White Girl" was probably the same thing that worried them about the "Déjeuner"—not that these were dirty pictures but that they ought to have been and somehow weren't.

As a purely formal arrangement, a "symphony in white," the picture lacks confidence. The whites are remarkably unsubtle—the picture looks as though it were painted in typists' Wite-Out. The wolfskin rug on the floor, its every tooth bared, is exactly the kind of vulgar detail that must have made Manet blanch. "The White Girl," however, completely changed Whistler's career, since the fuss about it carried across the Channel to London. His decision to make his career in London was the turning point of his life. After all, he could have gone back to America or stayed in France, either of which alternatives seems to us a better bet for an artist, since France was the big leagues and America was at least its own place. For a painter, London was just a backwater. So why did he choose it? The eruption over "The White Girl," it seems, had given him an incurable taste for creating sensations, and what every shock-artist needs is a straight man; in England, he found a whole nation of straight men. The French could be routinely scandalized, as "The White Girl" had demonstrated, and they enjoyed it, but they couldn't really be shocked—or, anyway, could be shocked only once. After that, it was all just taste. The English, on the other hand, could be shocked forever but, when it came to painting, couldn't really be scandalized. You might go on about the primacy of pure form and the horrors of the Academy, and they would be nicely appalled by your impudence, but they would still invite you out to dinner, since basically they didn't give a damn *how* you painted. Londoners could be shocked by sexual stuff, of course, but Whistler's personal life was discreet: after Jo took up with Courbet, he carried on with a long series of beautiful models, eventually marrying the last in the sequence, but he kept his models and his loves safe in the studio. Of course, he intended to remain a wild man even as he became an establishment figure; he was an American, and he didn't see why you couldn't break the rules and still win all the prizes.

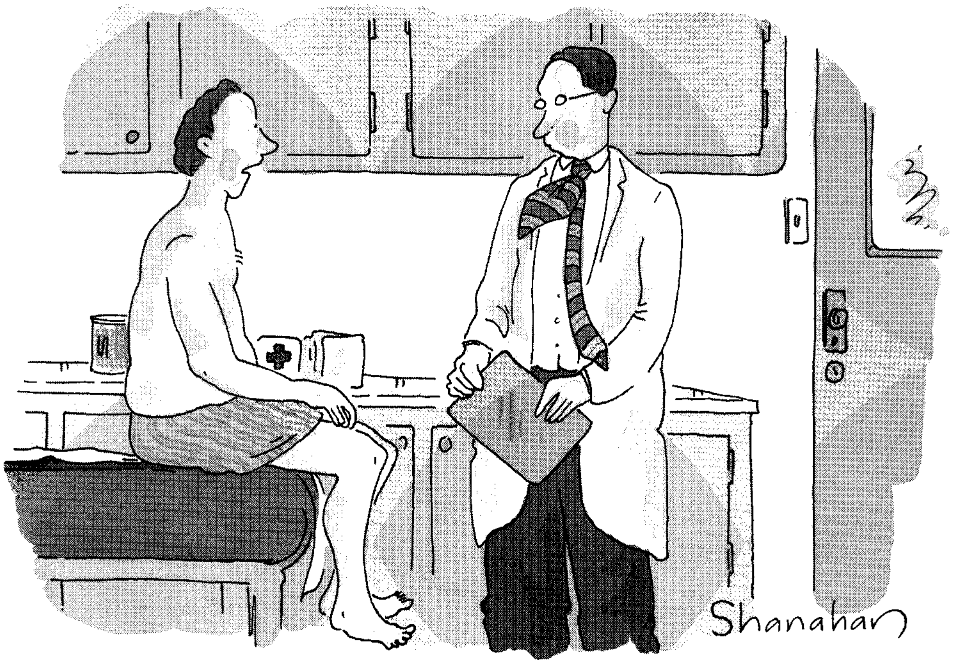
IN London, Whistler's campaign for fame intensified. First, he presented an indelible persona: he wore a monocle, he grew an impressive Second Empire mustache, and he donned a cape. He began to paint landscapes so blurry that nobody could tell exactly what they represented, and, after that, to paint portraits of famous people in such a peculiar manner that they hardly seemed to be portraits at all. His famous portrait of his mother is, in a sense, a pattern for all the other portraits. On the one hand, she's reduced to an iconic bas-relief, or a kind of primitive wood carving. But the simplification isn't really abstract. It makes a point. The rectitude of his style is shown to echo the rectitude of his native tradition, plain Yankee empiricism.

Oddly, it was the vague landscapes rather than the bizarre portraits that got him noticed again. His "Nocturnes," as he called his mostly cigar-box-size landscapes, appalled the art establishment. Appearing in great numbers at the National Gallery, they seem almost absurdly mild, as though they were painted in weak tea and nursery ink. Simple, banded blue pictures, heavily influenced by another chic Oriental source, Chinese ink-painting, they are soft-focus and pleasantly indecisive. They correspond better to the popular idea of Impressionism—a quick, swooning personal take—than real Impressionism ever did.

What shocked the British establishment, though, wasn't that the "Nocturnes" were hard to read but that they looked suspiciously easy to do. (They weren't: Whistler used to scrape and rescrape.) He was one of the first people, however, to see that in an age of mass journalism there is no such thing as bad publicity, and when he learned, in 1877, that John Ruskin, the critic who dominated British art in the fifties and sixties, had attacked him, he gleefully launched a libel suit. Ruskin was by then a sad case, and the incoherence of his writing was only occasionally interrupted by a burst of pure description. Both contestants ended up badly damaged—Ruskin because he recovered from an episode of madness to find his reputation ruined, Whistler because the farthing damages were not only derisive but left him with his lawyer's fees to pay. (His nerve didn't desert him, though. After the trial, he raced off to Venice—Ruskin territory, in the English view—and made a series of lithographs, just to show how wrong Ruskin had been about *that* town, too.)

Still, the libel case sealed his reputation as a celebrity—that daring Mr. Whistler, who paints pictures about nothing and isn't afraid of anyone—and other would-be celebrities began to come around to see how it was done. Soon, Whistler was running a kind of mini-West Point of aesthetic dandyism. Of all the brilliant youngsters who came around in the late seventies and early eighties, none listened more attentively, or learned more, than Oscar Wilde. Wilde borrowed from Whistler almost all the essential features of his grownup personal manner, from the unchanging costume to the habit of cozying up to journalists. From the American, he learned the insider-outsider game (being very Irish among the English when it paid him to be) and the virtues of the cheap paradox, and borrowed almost all the trappings of the aesthetic pose.

Wilde, though, made a major advance on Whistler's theories of self-promotion: where Whistler thought that you would eventually be able to cash notoriety in



"And would you be performing the actual surgery?"

for authority, Wilde saw that notoriety might be all the authority you needed. To Whistler's great annoyance, the two of them became a stock vaudeville act, appearing regularly together in *Punch* cartoons—the green carnation and the butterfly. Whistler enjoyed this at first, and collaborated with Wilde on various publicity stunts. (They would send each other enraged telegrams and then release them to the papers.) Soon, however, he came to resent it. This was partly just standard-issue rivalry—there was room for only one dandy-aesthete in this town—but the quarrel also rested on a genuine and serious intellectual difference. Whistler was a true aesthete, who really didn't give a damn about anything except painting; Wilde, as his postmodern admirers tend to forget, was essentially an earnest type, full of wise saws and decorating tips. Whistler thought a picture was an arrangement of shapes in the same way that a turbine was an arrangement of parts: the only question worth asking was whether it worked, and the only person qualified to answer it was an expert engineer—i.e., himself. He once described his pictures as "a problem that I attempt to solve." Wilde, by contrast, was an aesthete in the old, lingering, moralizing manner, who believed in art as displaced religion.

This made Whistler modern in a way that Wilde never quite was. There are no knights-errant or weeping statues in Whistler—just the world as it is, with a butterfly watching. But his narrow aestheticism also made his doctrine irascible and exclusive, whereas Wilde's transformation of it was painless and popular. Wilde preached not just a doctrine of beauty but a doctrine of readily available beauty. In time, Wilde's popularity as a lecturer annoyed Whistler so much that he decided to give a lecture himself. He spoke, at a theatre, late at night, on the theory that lectures held earlier in the evening fail because everybody is thinking about dinner. This famous "Ten o' Clock" lecture was planned as an attack on Wilde's notion that painters weren't the only people who could judge painting. To Whistler's astonishment, though, Wilde, who was in the audience, wrote a series of instant rebuttals. One was not only witty but smart: "Nor do I accept the dictum that only a painter is a judge of painting. I say that only an artist is a judge of art; there is a wide difference." A later reply was not only smart but profound: "Be warned in time, James; and remain as I do, incomprehensible: to be great is to be misunderstood."

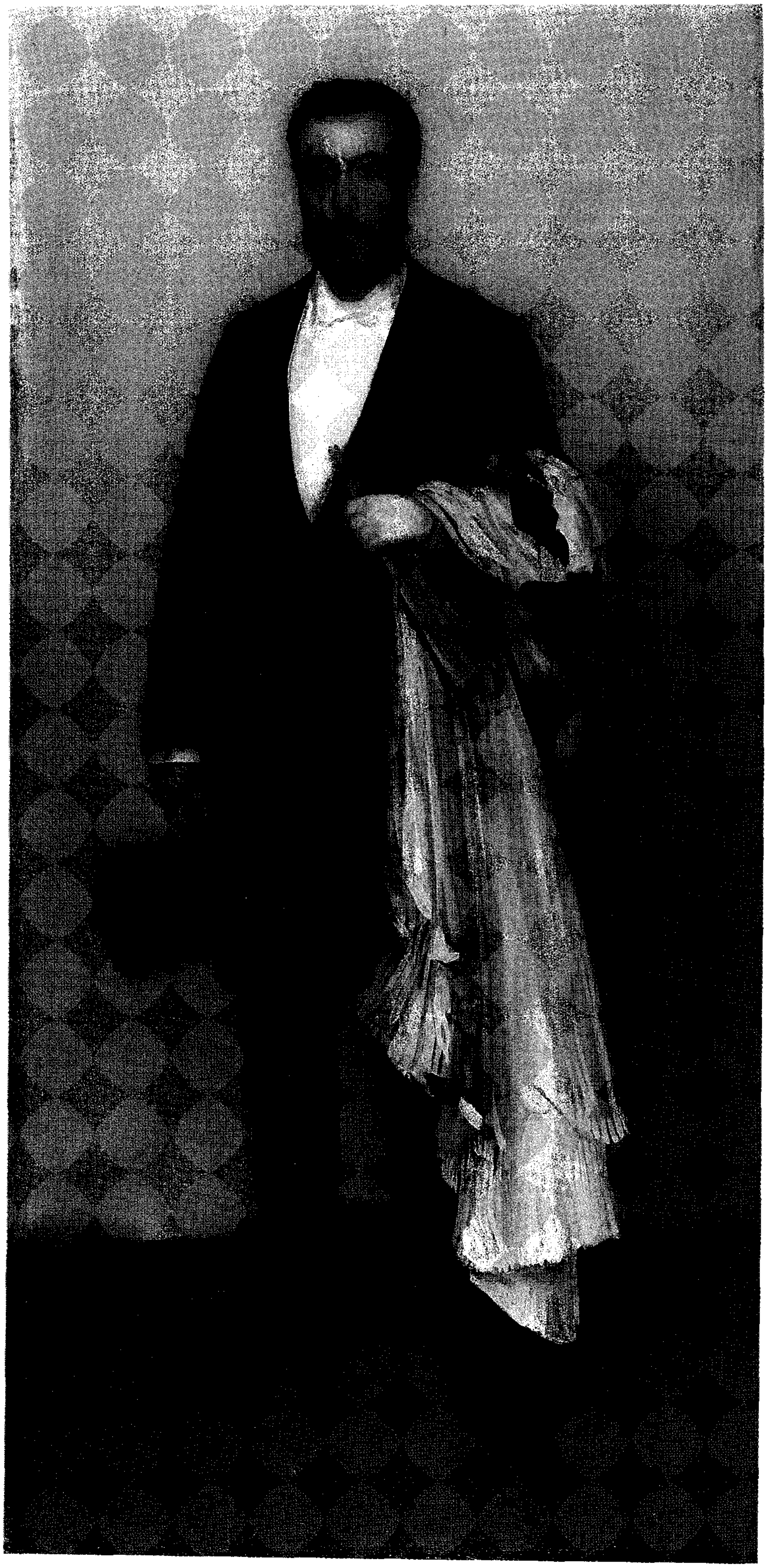
Still, you could go on losing to guys like Wilde forever and still look like a winner, since in a publicity culture what matters isn't whether you win or lose but whom you get to play against. More important, the episodes suggest the fundamental falseness of the aesthetic of the "Nocturnes." Nobody who can spend as much time in worldly calculation as Whistler did is really going to be satisfied with sensitively registering the envelope of air on a beach. Not surprisingly, only two of Whistler's "Nocturnes" remain moving, and they are of London at night: the sublime "Nocturne: Blue and Gold—Old Battersea Bridge" and the "Nocturne in Grey and Gold—Piccadilly." Whistler was the first painter to see that the ugliness and fog of industrialized London had created a new kind of loveliness: a Venice of dim light and gaslight and fog and blue shadow.

BUT the metropolitan landscape needs metropolitan people to put in it. Upon his arrival in London, Whistler had begun to paint portraits of well-known people, beginning with Thomas Carlyle. For Carlyle, he employed the same neutral blankness of expression that he had developed for "The White Girl," and in the new context the blankness began to read like psychological depth. The Carlyle portrait drew other famous people to him, and, though Whistler never went all the way to the top—the top was too conservative—he became a favorite portrait painter of the London demimonde: "fast" duchesses, daring merchants, American expatriate millionaires.

Soon, and against the grain of the standard Victorian portrait, he hit on a simple, unvarying format: a long vertical panel, with the subject shown at full length in formal clothes against a monochromatic background. The simplifications of his style at the time were thought to be merely "aesthetic," a way of annihilating the subject. In reality, they allowed him to invent a sublime shorthand of appearances. Whistler was no good at likeness, and he knew it, and anyway the long, attenuated format of the pictures makes the faces of his sitters hardly matter at all: the faces are so high up that they seem forlornly detached from their bodies, and stare down like shut-ins looking out onto the street from a fourth-floor window. His portraits are less portraits than face cards, with a face card's flatness and clear, symbolic significance. But he could use the narrow confines of this format to illuminate the façade of social life—to throw a slanting light on the surface of things. The abstract refinements—the nuanced veils of color from which the sitters emerge like ghosts—are a way of making the human details that remain count more, not less. Whistler knew everything about clothes, for instance. When he went to paint a little girl named Cicely Alexander, he actually designed a dress for her to wear. ("The dress might have frills on the skirts and about it—and a fine little ruffle for the neck or else lace—also it might be looped up from them to tie with bows of pale yellow ribbon . . . of course not an atom of blue!" he wrote in a letter to Cicely's mother.) And if he didn't know about likeness, he knew a lot about *looks:* the permanent pout on Cicely's lips belies everything she's wearing.

The concentration that his minimal portrait style allowed him to achieve—its ability to make a prop or the turning of a head seem filled with meaning—gives his portraits, for all their apparent hauteur, an air of breezy intelligence. Though they are still used as "illustrations" on the covers of Henry James novels, Whistler was much less reverent in his view of the upper classes than James was, and much more penetrating. In fact, there is no other portrait painter so brashly *familiar* with his subjects as Whistler. Even the greatest portrait painters before him have a reticence: Rembrandt or Velázquez has a withheld quality that we interpret as intelligence. Whistler, in the American manner, takes the sitter by the lapels and says, "There you are." His portraits, for all the dark curtains of color in their backgrounds, are a series of confident judgments, each with a little sting in its tail. The National Gallery show contains three of the best: Cicely Alexander, the little girl in the dress; the chorus girl turned Lady Meux; and the art critic Théodore Duret, standing there with his wife's cloak and fan, helpless. They look refined at first, but the labels they imply aren't: the Spoiled Brat, the Grasping Bitch, and the Emasculated Husband. All of them have a caricatural clarity of judgment. For all Whistler's strutting about their purely formal qualities, they seem "abstract" now only in the way that all good description is: set down in a confident, streamlined stenography.

Through the portraits, Whistler lived long enough to see his style become popular, and long enough, too, to see that this style wasn't going to matter in quite the way he thought it would. He died in 1903, at a time when the leap to pure abstraction, which he had always ostensibly hoped for in painting, was about to take place. But abstract art would be achieved purely on mystical terms, rather than on the worldly terms he would have preferred. That is Whistler's paradox. For all his tirades against literary painting, the truth is that he was the most literary of painters—a recorder of behavior rather than a singer of form—and his real influence was therefore on books, not on pictures. Picasso and Matisse apparently didn't give him a second thought, but it is hard to imagine Bloomsbury without his example: the characteristic Bloomsbury mixture of swooning fastidiousness with a sharp squeeze of lemon was the manner he had invented. The aestheticism of the eighties and nineties remained vital in England long after its equivalent in France—the manner of Mallarmé—was a dead letter, and it remained vital largely because the British variety had a savor of social spice, which had been supplied largely by Whistler. Even at the outer, more self-consciously avant-garde edges of Bloomsbury, something of Whistler remains. And T. S. Eliot's combination of pastiche and melancholy, his satirical insights suddenly emerging from the Symbolist gloom, and his melancholy vision of London at twilight ("And then the lighting of the lamps") still seem Whistlerian. Despite Eliot's reticence and Whistler's exhibitionism, they would probably have understood each other: two local guys abroad who had to make up an American art out of the bits and pieces of the Old World they found lying around at dusk. ◆



"Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Black: Portrait of Théodore Duret," 1883-84.

HE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, WOLFE FUND, CATHERINE LORILLARD WOLFE COLLECTION, 1913.

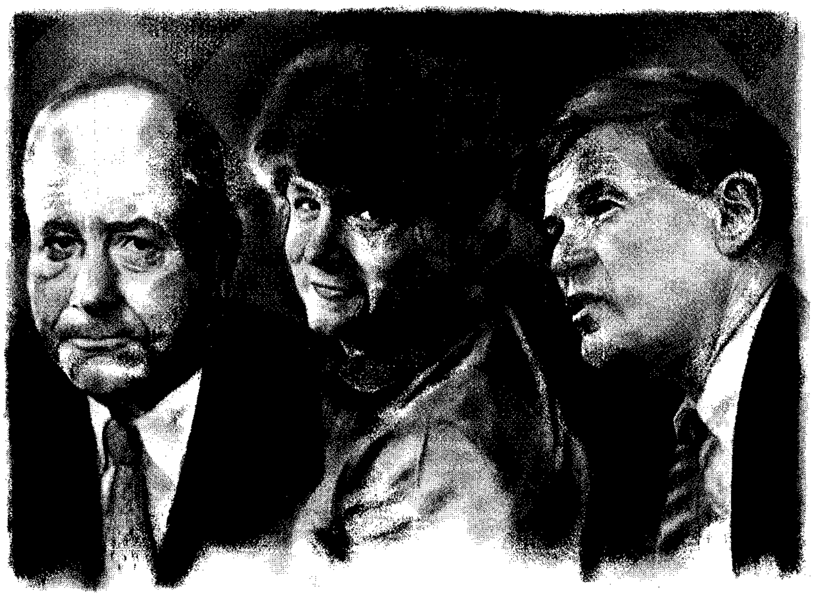
BOOKS

IT'S ELEMENTARY

Despite the headlines, this could be a great moment for education.

BY JAMES TRAUB

ANOTHER school year has shuddered to a close, trailing behind it the usual unsightly mess of scandal, distraction, and academic failure. The schools, and with them our hopes for the collective future, seem locked in a permanent decline. What most of us know is that American public schools, especially inner-city schools, are unsafe and unsound, that American students are goofing off while Asians master calculus, that semiliterates are enrolling in college. And the common wisdom is mostly right. But what's also true, strangely enough, is that we are living in the dawn of a great age of school reform. The very shamefulness of the schools, and a new sense of urgency about the need to improve them, has given the more reflective advocates of change a status they didn't have before. In December, 1993, Walter H. Annenberg announced that he would give five hundred million dollars to public-school reform. A plutocrat like Annenberg might be expected to devote his fortune to traditionalist boot-camp solutions: a longer school day and year, more tests, no more of that "student centered" claptrap left over from the sixties. In fact, Annenberg is being advised in his funding decisions by Dr. Theodore R. Sizer, the founder of the Brown University-based Coalition of Essential Schools and probably the most prominent voice in the world of progressive school reform. And Sizer, in turn, has been working closely with Deborah Meier, a radical reformer very much in the sixties mold, who founded a cluster of collaboratively run schools in East Harlem.



Multiple choice: Reformers Walter Annenberg, Deborah Meier, and Theodore Sizer.

SCOTT HUNT

What the growing centrality of an iconoclastic figure like Meier proves is not that the left has carried the day—it definitely hasn't—but that the old fighting words of educational policy are becoming obsolete. The right, or elements of it, now embraces the idea of changing the public schools rather than letting them wither away; elements of the left now understand that funding is less important than the intellectual values and the principles that school should foster. Conservatives accept that it's not enough to prate about "higher standards"; liberals have stopped bridling at the phrase. It's now possible to gain agreement on what makes a good school; unfortunately, no one has figured out how to make a good system.

Deborah Meier is the sort of utopian pedagogue who pledges her faith in "the extraordinary untapped capacities of all our children"; but, unlike so many radical reformers, she is also firmly rooted in the reality of the classroom. Meier has spent her career trying to change the culture of public schools; and her experience affords her a position from which to criticize both those who defend conventional public schools and those who would just as soon junk public education altogether. In her new book, "The Power of Their Ideas" (Beacon; $20), Meier tells how in the early sixties, upon completing graduate work at the University of Chicago, she began substitute teaching in the public schools. She records not only the sheer delight of teaching small children but her shock at the "disrespectful environments" that governed most schools—the "smell, taste and feel . . . of petty humiliations imposed to remind teachers and children of who's the boss."

By the late sixties, Meier was in New York, advising public-school teachers at a City College workshop. Her work caught the attention of Anthony Alvarado, who was then the superintendent of District 4, in East Harlem. Alvarado's guiding idea was to create many autonomous schools and to permit parents to choose among them. In 1974, he invited Meier to start up an elementary school. She created Central Park East, at 106th Street, and began attracting idealistic young teachers and local parents hoping for something better for their children. At the time, District 4, covering one of the more impoverished stretches of New York, had the lowest reading scores in the city; only sixteen per cent of its students were reading at grade level. Over the next decade, Alvarado transformed District 4 into an island of reform in the midst of New York's astoundingly bureaucratized and hamstrung school system. By 1987, according to "Miracle in East Harlem," by Seymour Fliegel, a former deputy of Alvarado's, sixty-two per cent of the

District 4 students were reading at grade level. (Citywide rates had also increased, though not nearly as much.) Dropout and truancy rates plummeted. The district, almost alone in the city, was significantly outperforming its students' socioeconomic profile. The word "miracle" doesn't seem all that hyperbolic. Apparently, Meier and her colleagues knew what they were doing.

WHAT, then, is Meier doing? At the heart of "The Power of Their Ideas" is the story of Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS), which Meier and her colleagues established in 1985. As Meier describes it, CPESS provides the respectful environment she yearned for as a teacher. In most schools, teachers lead the lives of factory workers, discharging their service and going home. Until 1988, in fact, teachers in New York were required to punch a time clock—and teachers, like anyone else, adapt to a climate of low expectations. At CPESS, by contrast, teachers enjoy an almost unheard-of level of autonomy and professionalism. In effect, the school is theirs. They control the curriculum, the schedule, assessment and testing, discipline. They work collaboratively with the principal and with one another. And they are allotted an average of an hour a day to meet and discuss pedagogic issues—a luxury that teachers almost anywhere would envy. The implicit assumption is that teaching high-school students is an intellectually ambitious act, as well as a coöperative one.

The truth is that in plenty of schools—some parochial schools, for example—the principals behave like authority figures, yet the teachers are still treated respectfully. There is more than one kind of effective school culture, though Meier's passionate faith in her own vision precludes her saying so. Meier still has a lot of sixties in her. She believes in the principle of the collective—what she calls "the democratic community." And the democratic community, in school as elsewhere, turns out to be an unattainable ideal. Meier describes a traumatic revolt by some parents which almost strangled the elementary school in its cradle. The school was largely saved by the intervention of Seymour Fliegel, who concluded that Meier was an outstanding educator who deserved the

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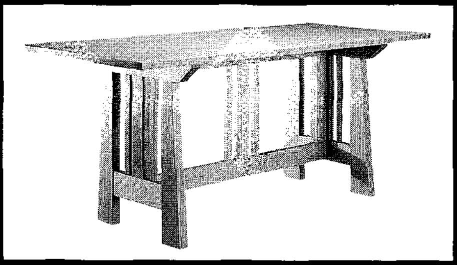

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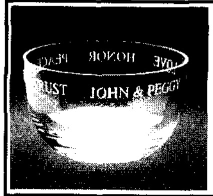

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district's support. At the same time, Fliegel writes that Meier had exhausted her already overworked staff with her consensualism, and Meier herself concedes that in the aftermath she was forced to become "somewhat more of a traditional leader." It's precisely when educational reforms lose contact with school reality, and take on an a-priori character, that they begin to fail.

Meier is on more solid ground when she writes that schools must be an intellectual community. At many schools, students spend so much time taking courses in conflict resolution and AIDS education, and talking about self-esteem and personal growth, that academics seem like an afterthought. Students at CPESS spend two hours every day on humanities and two hours on math and on science—the teachers structure each of these blocks as they choose—and one hour to meet in groups with a teacher/adviser. There is no tracking, which Meier views as a system that reinforces the existing social order. Everyone is expected to reach the same high standards. Students devote their final two years to the preparation of "portfolios" in fourteen areas. Instead of taking final exams, students devise their own assessment in collaboration with their teachers, and ultimately make "presentations" to a "graduation committee." The loftiness of the terminology and of the process is Meier's way of conveying the principle that high standards imply respect for students, just as they do for teachers.

What is arguably most radical about CPESS is this individualization and intimacy. Students in almost all big urban high schools are processed in batches, and march through identical classes in ranks of thirty. That's why the system is called "the factory model." It works fine for the kids who rise to the top, but the casualty level, especially in a place like East Harlem, can be devastating. In large high schools, Meier writes, "there is no thick, complex and powerful counterculture to balance the one that has been developed for adolescents only, no counterforce representing serious adult ideas and concerns to which these novices might now and then apprentice themselves." Large high schools, that is, require the factory model. Only in small schools can individual contact be incessant and effortless. CPESS, which includes grades seven through twelve, has fewer than four hundred and seventy-five students. The school is divided into "houses" of between seventy-five and eighty students, each with a complement of four teachers. Meier is very persuasive on the academic merits of the small school. But since big schools tend to have better football programs and marching bands, being persuasive may not be enough to win the debate.

Meier was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 1987 for her work. Her fame and the renown of District 4 have turned the Central Park East schools into a pilgrimage site for school reformers. I've visited the high school myself; the morning I went, last year, I was part of a group of about twenty, whose other members were all teachers and administrators. I was struck by the spruceness of the building and by the enthusiasm and spunk of the kids. The contrast with the other ghetto schools I knew could hardly have been sharper. At the same time, I found the discussion in the two classes I sat in on pretty desultory; several of the other visitors had much the same impression. Meier herself admits, in one of a succession of journal entries that punctuate "The Power of Their Ideas," that her students' mean combined S.A.T. score in one recent year was 790. It's true that S.A.T.s measure general skills, not academic achievement. But 790 is still a low number: the national mean is 900. Meier does point out that the very high rate of graduation means that virtually all her students take the S.A.T.s, while elsewhere in New York only about the top quarter take them, thereby lowering the CPESS average.

CPESS is clearly a successful high school. Of eighty-five students who entered the ninth grade in 1989, eighty-three had graduated—some from other schools—five years later. At many ghetto schools, the comparable rate would be less than half. An unusually large fraction of CPESS graduates are, in turn, accepted by prestigious private colleges. And while Meier has been accused of skimming the best students she writes that CPESS's population is "roughly equivalent to a cross sampling of New York City," which is to say impoverished and academically deficient, though less so than those in the ghetto schools nearby. I regard the S.A.T. statistics as evidence not that Meier has the wrong formula but that the tide of academic and socioeconomic disadvantage she is trying to turn is more powerful than she reckons.

If Deborah Meier is no longer so very far in the vanguard, it's because the mainstream is catching up. President Bush's America 2000 initiative included the recommendation that "the teachers, principals and parents in each school must be given the authority—and the responsibility—to make important decisions about how the school will operate." The need for a radical devolution of authority has achieved near-consensual status in school circles. Liberals like Meier want to free schools from bureaucratic control in order to re-create them as respectful, democratic communities. Conservatives believe that state control means usurpation of personal initiative. Scholars John Chubb and Terry Moe, the authors of "Politics, Markets and America's Schools," a 1990 study of five hundred public and private schools, argue that "the strongest determinant of school effectiveness, more important than family background or any other factor, was autonomy from bureaucratic control."

Making schools self-governing is a first structural step toward freeing latent energies, Meier says, and the next is allowing parents to choose among them, as Anthony Alvarado did in District 4. "Choice can make long-term experimentation possible in our public schools," she writes. "We might thus be able to accumulate wisdom rather than endlessly recycling fads."

Meier knows that she is treading on burning ground here. She cautiously observes that the idea of choice "may seem counterintuitive, even shocking, to many current defenders of public education." Liberals have only recently come to accept the virtues of marketplace mechanisms; and the school voucher, a vogue proposal of the late Reagan and early Bush eras which would have allowed parents to spend public funds on private-school tuition, has given choice a bad name in educational circles. (The voucher idea essentially ran out of steam after California voters rejected a referendum on the subject in 1993, but congressional Republicans have recently vowed to revive it.) So, while it's now fairly safe for liberals to endorse the sort of "public-school choice" established by Anthony Alvarado, many still fear choice, because the wrong people like it. Jonathan Kozol, in his 1991 "Savage Inequalities," declared that poor parents who can't read well or who lack "energy" or "audacity" or "the limitless horizons of the middle class" or faith in the market can hardly be expected to exercise their choices. If Kozol weren't such a champion of the poor, one would be tempted to call his position patronizing.

To be fair, what Kozol really objects to is the use of devices like choice to release society from its obligation to do something about the root causes of poverty. The isolation of the poor and the pathologies of inner-city life constitute huge disadvantages that school, even in its wisest incarnations, cannot be expected to overcome fully. James Coleman, in his massive 1966 study, "Equality of Educational Opportunity," argued that a child's social environment accounted for far more variation in academic achievement than any school-related factor. All the same, school reform obviously can't wait for drastic social reform, especially in the current political climate. And where many liberals, including Kozol, go wrong is in overestimating the importance of school spending. Of course, schools should have a decent physical plant, books that aren't falling apart, computers, and so on, but per-pupil spending, Coleman noted, has virtually no correlation with school success.

In a 1982 study, in fact, Coleman found that parochial schools, which spend *less* per pupil than public schools but maintain an environment that is more orderly, secure, and academically focussed, achieve significantly better results. Schools, that is, *did* make a difference; but culture mattered more than resources. Chubb and Moe concluded that the autonomy of private and parochial schools was what made the critical difference. And what Meier and many others have been demonstrating is that the liberal tradition can furnish alternative models just as effectively as the archdiocese. Meier barely mentions money, except to say that her schools don't cost much more than ordinary ones.

Governance issues like autonomy and choice form the great frontier of school reform today. Many former proponents of vouchers have shifted their allegiance to the idea of charter schools. Such a school receives a "charter" from a state school board or other sponsoring body to operate independently, as if it were a one-school district, though it remains accountable to the public chartering

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body for its performance. Twelve states have passed charter legislation; twenty more have legislation pending; a number of charter schools have already opened. The growing popularity of this measure and similar ones, and the apparent eclipse of vouchers, represents a surprising vote of confidence in public education at a time when faith in the public sector generally seems to be reaching an all-time low. Should charters succeed, they may provide a model for those who want to transform the public delivery of services, not abolish it.

ONE of the documents in my collection of school-reform literature is the draft of a paper entitled "We Know What Good Schools Look Like, Don't We?" The answer, of course, is "Yes," and that leads the author, Sophie Sa, executive director of the Panasonic Foundation, to ask, "Why is it so hard to change schools from what they are now to what they could and should be?" Her own answer is that "most people have not seen good schools." This is a very optimistic answer. On the level of moral philosophy, it translates into "If we know the good, we will choose it." It's hard to see why this should be true in schools, since it's not true elsewhere in life. Something as different as what Deborah Meier describes is profoundly threatening, and not just to "authority" but to people whose lives and outlooks have been shaped by the conventional system.

The culture that Deborah Meier or Theodore Sizer so eloquently describe can no more be transfused into an existing school than learning can be transfused into a student. Last December, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that five studies of members of Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools, a network of eight hundred schools (among them CPESS), found an ingrained resistance to serious changes in school culture. "What you were left with," said an anthropologist who had looked at eight schools as part of the coalition's own study, "were a few teachers who were still continuing to try to do things in their individual classrooms or in small teams, but very little schoolwide had changed."

You have to stand some distance away from the euphoric literature of school reform to recognize what a tiny, hothouse world it describes. Few of the issues that Meier raises get seriously discussed even in New York City, which has been convulsed and thoroughly distracted by a battle for control over the school system. The schools chancellor, Ramon Cortines, who recently submitted his resignation, has the veteran schoolman's suspicion of the latest nostrum, while the mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, has been preoccupied with reducing the schools' budget and slashing the bureaucracy. Serious school reformers and admirable schools are dotted around the country, but in between the dots is a dreadful void. I recently received a copy of a really frightening book entitled "Mikey and Mary Are Illiterate and Nobody Cares," published in Ridgecrest, California. The book consists of a hundred or so annotated interviews with anonymous parents and teachers, all of whom seem to be numb with despair. One parent reports that in high school his son has taken courses in "bachelor living, astrology and even a class on how to watch television." Teachers describe students falling further and further behind grade level and sinking into a daze. One fifth-grade teacher admits having spent four weeks doing nothing except preparing for the Christmas program. "In the past," the teacher says, "I always concentrated on teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, but no more. The administration doesn't care and the parents don't know any better. So now I kick back and I'm considered a superior teacher."

The most awful thing about this dystopia is that in some sense it works: the students get promoted and, illiterate though they may be, presumably go off to college, as American students do. The only time a parent or an administrator gets really riled, according to the testimony in "Mikey and Mary," is when a teacher calls a halt to the charade. A high-school English teacher recalls failing students who refused to keep up with a short weekly writing assignment. "Immediately there was a barrage of calls to the principal concerning my 'insensitivity' to the struggling students," the teacher writes. "Yesterday I was called to the principal's office to be informed of her 'displeasure' with my commitment as a teacher."

The only energies for reform that emerge from this devitalized system are utterly retrograde, at least from the point of view of Deborah Meier or Theodore Sizer. The parents want boot-camp basics—the more repetitious the better—and they want vocational counselling in junior high. The teachers want exact instructions, not autonomy, and they're practically unanimous on the virtues of tracking. They take what appears to them to be the common-sense position that only a few children are in fact capable of generating powerful ideas, and the rest should learn how to spell and behave themselves in order to prepare for a career answering phones in a back office.

How dismal! A society that prizes social mobility as ours does is far better off erring on the side of Deborah Meier's democratic faith in everyone than on this glum acceptance of the existing order. And there is an economic as well as a moral imperative for a more egalitarian vision of schooling. In the modern economy, all Americans have to be able to use their noodles. Schools need to be communities of learning rather than settings for a Christmas program and a football team. What has propelled people like Meier from the periphery to the center of the ongoing school debate is the recognition that a new and different form of the public school is no longer a luxury for bored suburban kids. The world of "Mikey and Mary" is plainly a dead end.

It's probably true that the public schools have bottomed out and begun to improve. Ever since the 1983 publication of the federal study entitled "A Nation at Risk"—an attack on school standards rendered in the apocalyptic language of the Cold War—students have been taking more courses in math, science, and foreign languages. The heyday of "bachelor living" is behind us. Still, it will be a very long time before we catch up with much of Western Europe and East Asia. In "National Standards in American Education" the educational historian Diane Ravitch cites a 1990-91 study that found that only four per cent of Taiwanese fifth graders and ten per cent of Japanese scored as low as the average American fifth grader on a battery of math tests. The gaps were almost as large for reading. On the other hand, Ravitch reports, American students have a vastly higher opinion of their abilities than do students almost anywhere else in the world. Self-esteem may be one of the few commodities that we could export to Japan. The ultimate obstacle to serious school reform may be our TV-numbed, self-esteeming, anti-intellectual culture.

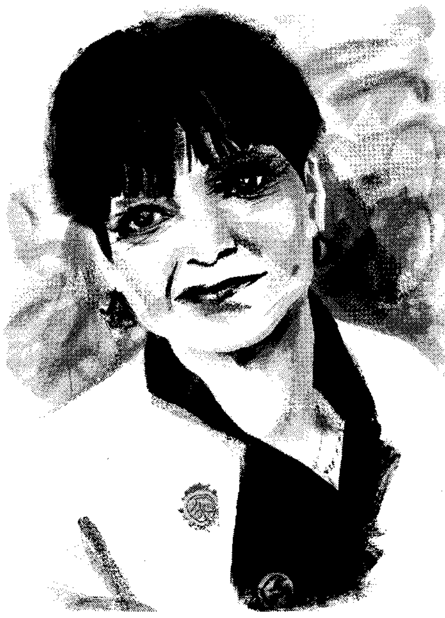
Ravitch champions higher standards and some form of national curriculum and national testing—which Meier and Sizer oppose—to achieve them, but she, too, believes that schools cannot be made hospitable to learning without choice, autonomy, and subtler forms of assessment. There is now a fairly widespread understanding that you ought not separate the "hard" reforms of high standards from the "soft" reforms that Meier describes, but that is what's happening now in much of the country. No reader of "Mikey and Mary" will find that surprising. You can sell boot camp, at least if you throw in tracking; but the teacher-driven school sounds too ambitious to take seriously.

So the prospects for truly systematic change are dim. Of course they are: inertia is the first law of institutions, and most particularly of public ones. On the other hand, one can take heart at the sense of growing ideological convergence in the education community, the multiplier effect of commitments like Walter Annenberg's, the proliferation of state laws enabling the creation of charter schools. It is, in fact, just such "top down" measures that may make possible the "bottom up" reforms championed by people like Meier, by forcibly dislodging deadweights like the bureaucracy. If she can hold out long enough, Deborah Meier might have a shot at educating Mikey's and Mary's grandchildren. ♦

GENDER UNCERTAINTIES

Marjorie Garber looks at bisexuality.

BY EDMUND WHITE



Marjorie Garber

GORE VIDAL once observed that there are homosexual acts but not homosexual people; Michel Foucault gave this aperçu a history when he argued that there were no homosexuals before the pseudoscientific passion for taxonomy in the nineteenth century created the label. As Foucault put it, "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species." Despite Foucault's enormous prestige, his point of view has always been more provocative than convincing to Americans, partly because Americans—Emersonian rhetoric notwithstanding—believe in a kind of communitarianism rather than individualism. In the United States, where so many political factions are linked to ethnic identity, homosexuals have been astute in presenting themselves as something very much like a racial or cultural entity. Perhaps our history as a haven for persecuted religious sects makes us want to defend the rights of groups rather than of that universal and rather abstract being the individual citizen.

Marjorie Garber, in her new book, "Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life" (Simon & Schuster; $30), has found a clever way to argue Foucault's case to her compatriots by

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initially appearing to defend the rights of yet another minority and only later making it clear that the very concept of bisexuality calls into doubt many of our neatest divisions. Bisexuality is the third term—representing what one might call the "excluded muddle"—that undermines the certainty of gender identification and practice. Garber, a professor at Harvard and the author of a 1991 book on cross-dressing, entitled "Vested Interests," notes that audiences on television talk shows exhibit more hostility toward bisexuals than toward people who label themselves clearly either as homosexuals or as heterosexuals. Bisexuals are perceived as people who want to have it both ways, who are irresolute, immature, even treacherous. (In the nineteen-eighties, for instance, bisexual men were demonized as double agents who might sneak AIDS into the marriage bed.) Garber has set out not to alleviate the anxiety unleashed by bisexuality but to explore it; she argues that "to add 'bisexuality' as a third category here is not in fact to refine the terms of analysis but instead to expose the radical limitations of rights-based arguments when linked to a concept of fixed identity."

In order to defy categorization, Garber looks at everything from Freud's theories, Kinsey's surveys, and Calvin Klein's boxer shorts with a fly for women to the Leavitt-Spender controversy and the plot of Allen Drury's novel "Advise and Consent." She "unpacks" the theme of the bisexual vampire. She examines bisexuality among bohemians of the past—in Bloomsbury, in Harlem and Greenwich Village, in Georgia O'Keeffe's New Mexico. In her analysis of the "cross-gender magnetism" that has become an element of Hollywood chic in current celebrity biographies, she observes that a biographer's speculations about steamy bisexual alliances are written in a mode she amusingly dubs "the prurient wishful subjunctive"—as in "Sexual intimacy . . . might well have been consistent with their mutual admiration." One of the delights of this long book (nearly six hundred pages) is its mixture of classical erudition and pop-culture savvy. Garber switches from probing the myth of Tiresias to quoting a 1984 issue of *People:* "A psychologist recently asked his 7-year-old nephew, 'Is Michael Jackson a girl or a boy?' The boy thought for a moment before replying 'Both.' "

Garber may be an advocate for acknowledging the pervasiveness of bisexuality, but she isn't interested in making it sound harmless. For example, she is willing to risk offending community standards by arguing that the teacher-student relationship is properly erotic (if not always sexual), and that this erotic pull is often between students and teachers of the same sex, even when neither is homosexual outside the classroom. She makes her point emphatically, saying, "Transference on a teacher is *bisexual,* which is to say that it does not necessarily correlate with the student's ordinary sexuality or sexual orientation. That many great teachers have *been* bisexual—have loved, and had love affairs with, both men and women—is a slightly, but only a slightly, different story."

IF Garber is willing to offend conservative heterosexuals, she is equally ready to anger gays by claiming that two of their icons, Oscar Wilde and Virginia Woolf, and many other sacred figures as well, were bisexual rather than homosexual. Garber contends that people today are attracted to "conversion narratives" in which individuals suddenly switch from homosexuality to heterosexuality, or vice versa, and she criticizes this practice of revising one's earlier experiences in the light of one's later behavior, as if one were "really" this or that. In a discussion of how homosexual crushes at school give way to adult heterosexuality, for example, Garber points out that nowhere in this familiar scenario—"the experience of same-sex school love, the recoding of it as a 'phase,' the transferential relation between teacher and student, and the final 'stabilization' of a sexual identity"—is there an acknowledgment that bisexuality might be the most useful description of it. For Garber, sexuality never constitutes an essence but, rather, is a matter of the tales people tell themselves.

Garber recognizes that many lesbians and gay men consider the bisexual label an alibi, a somewhat acceptable halfway station in coming out, yet she mentions that younger queer leaders place bisexuality "farther outside the 'mainstream' than gay and lesbian identity"—apparently believing it to be an identity more difficult to assume than simple homosexuality. She invokes the case of Jonathan Dollimore, the author of "Sexual Dissidence" and a professor at the University of Sussex, in England, where he co-founded the Sexual Dissidence and Cultural Change program. "After many years with a male partner he is now living with a woman, and they recently had a child," Garber reports. "Some of the students who flocked to Sussex to study gay culture with him responded with anxiety." When Dollimore was asked whether he considered himself bisexual, he replied that he was working "to dislodge the complacencies and the prejudice of other people, and to make visible new forms of sexuality, new forms of desire."

SINCE it was Freud who popularized the theory of universal bisexuality, Garber writes extensively about him and his friendship with Wilhelm Fliess—a friendship that Freud admitted was covertly homoerotic. In 1897, Fliess—a kooky ear, nose, and throat specialist in Berlin who believed that the nose was the seat of passions, and linked nosebleeds and menstruation in a theory of periodicity—revealed to Freud his theory of bisexuality and his association of it with ambidexterity and left-handedness. A few months later, Freud was able to write to Fliess, "I do not in the least underestimate bisexuality. . . . I expect it to provide all further enlightenment." In fact, in essays written afterward, Freud argued that the origin of most neuroses is the repression of a universal bisexual nature—a key concept that he had clearly borrowed from Fliess but the source of which he just as clearly "forgot" (an act of strategic forgetting and intellectual appropriation that Freud later analyzed in "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life").

Garber's discussion of both Freud's subsequent elaboration of the theory of bisexuality and the ambiguous relationship that inspired it is masterly. Yet while she explores such theories in great detail, she never lets us know whether she considers them valid or their methodologies sound. Does she believe in Freud's theory of a nearly universal repression of childhood bisexuality? Does she accept Kinsey's scientific protocols?

At the heart of "Vice Versa" is a disquieting contradiction between its form and its underlying intention. The method is postmodernist and anthological: a series of ludic excursions into hundreds of examples of the idea of bisexuality. It's a method that at its best makes useful distinctions between such salient terms as "hermaphrodite" and "androgyne" but at its worst devolves into recounting the plots of forgotten books and forgettable movies. Of course, much of contemporary criticism grazes aimlessly, if pleasurably, through the pastures of intellectual history and leaves it to the reader to synthesize this abundance, or, better yet, to give up his or her usual habits of making sense in favor of a less coherent but more fertile openness of mind and feeling. But "Vice Versa," despite its appearance of disengaged sampling, has points to prove and a thesis to defend. Unfortunately, the reader has to read more than half the book before this thesis is explicitly and urgently announced:

> Why do we resist the idea that erotic life is all part of the same set of pleasures, that there is only one sexuality, of which the "sexualities" we have so effectively and efficiently defined are equally permissible and gratifying aspects?
>
> Because to do so would threaten the social structures on which "civilization" and "society" are built. And because much modern eroticism depends, in part, upon the sensation or perception of daring, of breaking a law or flaunting a taboo.

This guiding idea is an admirable one, but it is never vigorously argued or defended. Typically, Garber focusses throughout on the heady thrill of transgressive naughtiness at the expense of a deeper discussion of the threat that bisexuality poses to the orderly separation of gender roles, and of the corresponding rage that such behavior can provoke. It is as if her appreciation of the theoretical boldness of advancing the "dangerous" concept of bisexuality had blinded her to the darker dimensions of any sexual investigation.

And yet I must confess that Garber's very multiplication of examples browbeat me into wondering whether I myself might not have been bisexual had I lived in another era. When I was a young man, in the sixties, before the beginning of gay liberation, I was always in therapy trying to go straight. I was in love with three different women over a ten-year period, and even imagined marrying two of them. But after the Stonewall uprising, in 1969, I revised my thinking entirely: I decided I was completely gay and was only making the women in my life miserable. Following a tendency that Garber rightly criticizes, I denied the authenticity of my earlier heterosexual feelings in the light of my later homosexual identity. After reading "Vice Versa," I find myself willing to reinterpret the narrative of my own personal history. ♦

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SHOWCASE

HOMECOMING

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

AMTRAK should start offering a See America ticket for dance fans. Many important dance events now happen out of town. The Mark Morris Dance Group is a case in point. For about ten years, Morris has been America's most talked-about modern-dance choreographer. This spring, his 1989 "Dido and Aeneas," a dark and wrenching dance version of Purcell's opera, was filmed in Toronto. (It will probably be broadcast in the United States next year.) Meanwhile, Morris goes on spilling out new works. But for two years none of these new works have been seen in New York. The company has its office here; the dancers live here. But to perform they hit the road. There seems to be something wrong with the finances of dance-producing in this city.

Now, however, the M.M.D.G. is back in town. This week, at the New York State Theatre, the company will perform Morris's most ambitious piece, the 1988 "L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato," to the Handel oratorio. As twentieth-century art works go, "L'Allegro" is a rare thing, a cosmology, with the whole world, or a lot of it—knights, nymphs, shepherds, birds, crickets—coming together onstage while in the pit Handel sets off his own big show: thundering organs, pealing bells, basses growling up at us from the bottom of Hell.

Later this month, the company will decamp for Jacob's Pillow, in Massachusetts, but they'll be back in New York in December, this time, at last, with new works, two programs full. "Lucky Charms," a sort of nightmare at the Folies-Bergère; "A Spell," a happy, horny love dance to seventeenth-century lute songs; "Bedtime," a phantasmagoria to Schubert lieder, with Morris playing the kidnapping Erlking—the rest of the world has seen them. Now it's our turn. ♦

PHOTOGRAPH
BY ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

Guillermo Resto and Mark Morris rehearsing "Dido and Aeneas."

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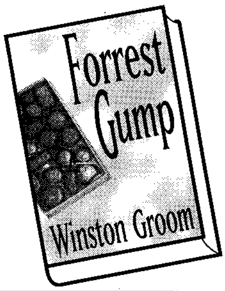

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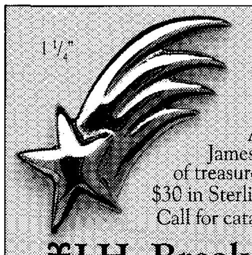

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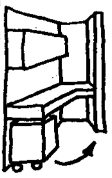

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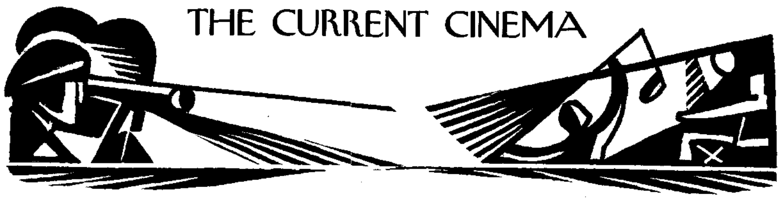


THE CURRENT CINEMA

ROUND THE TABLE

Jerry Zucker's costume epic revisits the legend of King Arthur.

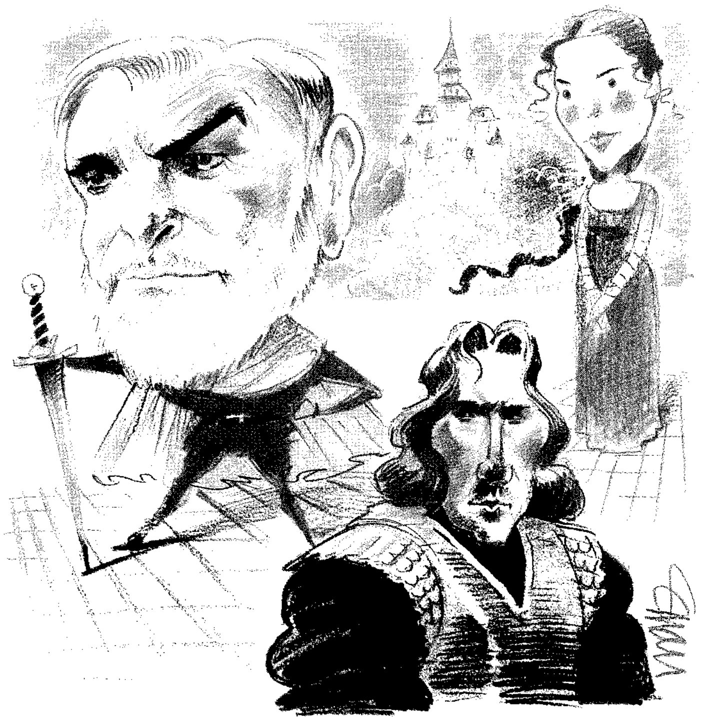
BY ANTHONY LANE

"FIRST KNIGHT" is set in Arthurian times, but the plot is far more recent. A proud beauty is torn by her desire for two men: the father figure who will never fail her and the tricky loner who will turn her heart to mush. In other words, Columbia Pictures presents "Casablanca" in shining armor. The lady is Guinevere (Julia Ormond), who is slated to wed King Arthur (Sean Connery), the Christian ruler whose moral rectitude is as deep as a moat. But the marriage is threatened by Lancelot, the lover boy (Richard Gere), who is neurotically insistent on rescuing Guinevere whenever she gets into trouble. This happens practically all the time, thanks to the foul intentions of Prince Malagant (Ben Cross), the Major Strasser of merry England.

With all this regular kidnapping, Julia Ormond never has a chance to try her hand at the standard activities of courtly heroines. She never has to plait bullrushes, pick herbs for monks, hand-rear forest fawns, or anything stupid like that. What she does find time for is a game of soccer—or, at any rate, an early version of soccer, which consists of booting an inflated bit of pig into a hole. She treats Richard Gere in much the same way when he turns up in her life, and you can't blame her. Lancelot finds Guinevere being hunted by Malagant's men, saves her maidenhood, and then has the gall to make a move on her, as if the maidenhood weren't worth much in the first place. She, being a trainee queen, gives him a topspin slap. "I can tell when a woman wants me," he croons, holding steady for a major closeup. You can see what Gere is up to. He isn't even bothering to behave or think in period; he's simply transferring his usual act—the slim-eyed supercreep, calm as marble—to an ancient landscape, and trusting that everyone will fall for it. It's a new take on Lancelot: Arthurian Gigolo.

If you think about it, this makes a kind of sly sense. Barely a scrap of Malory or Tennyson has survived in Hollywood's rehashes of the Camelot myth, and in the case of "First Knight" the bones of the story are barer than ever; but one aspect that strikes home to modern viewers is a suspicion that Lancelot's devotion to Guinevere is only a whisker away from self-obsession. I know that ceaseless worship of a lady was part of the ten-point plan for knightly perfection, but in severe cases the love was so consuming that the lady didn't really matter. Guinevere could have picked up her soccer ball and gone to the beach for a week, and Lancelot wouldn't have noticed. The oiled and pensive cool of Richard Gere may be laughable, but it's not so misguided as to wreck the movie. The whole production, in fact, lies just this side of ridiculous. It is heaped with anachronisms—I was especially keen on the pulley-powered speedboat rigged up by Malagant's men—but the director, Jerry Zucker, and his screenwriter, William Nicholson, are smart enough to see that Camelot was an anachronism to begin with. Squashed under the myth, the historical facts are so slender and uncertain that you might as well go with the myth, and shake it up to suit your fancy. Even Malory's "Le Morte d'Arthur," the grandest tour of the Round Table, was a medieval expansion of old, inherited tales; John Boorman felt free to refashion them as a Wagnerian saga in "Excalibur"; and if Jerry Zucker now chooses to interpret "Le Morte d'Arthur" by having his villain ride in and shout, "Nobody move or Arthur dies!"—well, good luck to him.

I must confess I was worried about this movie. I had "First Knight" nerves. Zucker is a well-known parody addict, having worked on "Airplane!" and the "Naked Gun" series, and there was a moment, as the lights went down, when I found myself praying that "First Knight" would turn out to be a spoof after all. Maybe we had been duped by a watertight publicity campaign into thinking that Zucker was making a serious movie, whereas all along he had been secretly shooting footage of Priscilla Presley as the Lady of the Lake. But it was foolish of me to expect a distinction between spoof and serious, since any decent movie about King Arthur has to be both. When Guinevere is first welcomed to Camelot, the knights form diagonal, intersecting lines, then part in front of her like the Red Sea to reveal their king. Heaven knows who dreamed up this ersatz ceremony, but it's impressively silly, and Julia Ormond manages to keep a straight face as she processes through the ranks. The same goes for the armor: the knights cover their forearms in silver tin cans that could hardly fend off a barbecue skewer, let alone a broadsword. But it lends an air of general spiffiness, and that's what counts. For his part, Sean Connery has to walk around with a bright, polished mini-shield strapped to one shoulder. It looks like a pet bidet.


Sean Connery, Richard Gere, and Julia Ormond, tangled up in Camelot.

King Arthur should have been a stroll for Connery, but the movie gives him a surprisingly rough ride. It's not just the bidet—it's the fact that the bidet is all he needs. In the big battle scene, Arthur hangs back and surveys the action, too slow and senior to pitch in. In Connery's previous pictures, his age was seldom referred to; like his unchanging accent, his years served only to toughen his leathery appeal. But "First Knight" plays up the gap between Arthur and Guinevere: he was a friend of her father, who once asked, "Do all fathers think their daughters are so beautiful?" It's a line that Arthur quotes approvingly to his beloved, thus snaring the movie in an Electra complex. The plot demands that he be cuckolded and humiliated, enfeebled by love and unable to arouse Guinevere, whose hormones are stampeding in another direction; in the end, he relinquishes everything he holds dear. The sight of Connery contemplating his own weakness is disconcerting; you're so used to watching his features stiffen with authority or curl into that canny half smile that when they suddenly grow crumpled and thunderous you're not sure how to react. I was reminded of "Ghost," in which the same director encouraged Patrick Swayze to become a cauldron of grief. True, the result looked like a man teetering for all eternity on the brink of a giant sneeze, but Zucker is obviously skilled at luring actors onto unfamiliar ground.

"First Knight" is a better picture than I was expecting; it's busy and unpretentious, and firmly resistant to the strain of mysticism that seems to infect any movie set before the year 1500. As usual, there are too many table-thumping speeches designed to publicize freedom, truth, blood loyalty, and so on, although I guess they come in handy when the movie needs to change pace. They insure that for a few minutes, at least, we won't have to watch milk-white stallions in meadows or happy peasants preparing to get happier still. ("There'll be some feasting today, I tell you!") As pageant pictures go, "First Knight" obeys a peculiar rhythm: the driving forces of the plot—Guinevere's tug of love, Malagant's killer crewcut—are established so swiftly that, from there on, the players just circle round fulfilling their essential natures over and over again. It's hard to pinpoint the climaxes even after they've happened (which may also be Guinevere's problem with Arthur). Zucker bravely decided to stage his biggest battle at night—you can't really see what's going on, and you're not meant to. It swells into a confusing clatter of darkness, with the only light provided by fiery arrows and blades reflecting the moon. In one sublime long shot, from a high vantage point, the struggle for the soul of England looks like an uprising in a cutlery drawer.

This is far more beautiful than exciting; for a movie dedicated to valor, in fact, "First Knight" fights fairly shy of thrills. It was designed by John Box, who worked on "Lawrence of Arabia" and other David Lean epics, and, as with Lean, the decorum is so finely thought through that every now and then you long for something—a minor character, a stray line—to bust out and disturb the pattern. I loved the look of Malagant's stronghold, a jagged slate horror sliced by Piranesi shadows; but Camelot is annoyingly spruce, and the recurring overhead views of the Round Table itself, epicenter of all human virtue, tended to prompt heretical thoughts of Vanna White. "First Knight" is perhaps too solid and foursquare to be thoroughly entertaining; what the whole enterprise lacks—what makes it melt from the mind—is the kind of breeziness that graced the costume hokum of earlier years. When Jacques Tourneur or Raoul Walsh made a swashbuckler, or when Michael Curtiz found a way for Errol Flynn to misbehave without going to jail, you felt that everyone concerned was enjoying the trip. I'm sure that Jerry Zucker loves those movies; he's just unfortunate enough to be living in an age that likes its heroes to be introspective and its values to be hammered home. When Julia Ormond flings a marauding thug out of her carriage so that he smacks face first into a tree, you cheer like crazy; when Richard Gere sits and broods in the rain, you wish that the Dark Ages would lighten up. ♦

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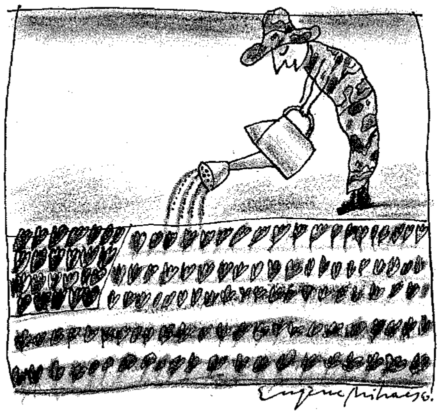

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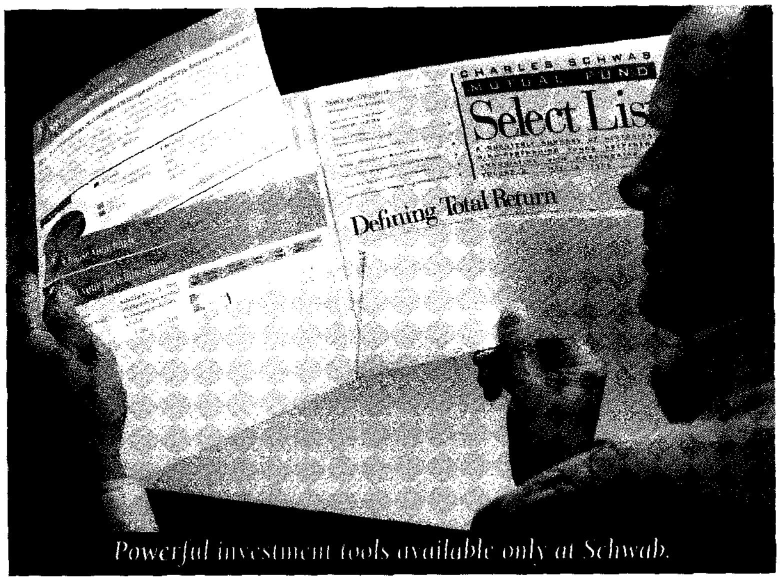

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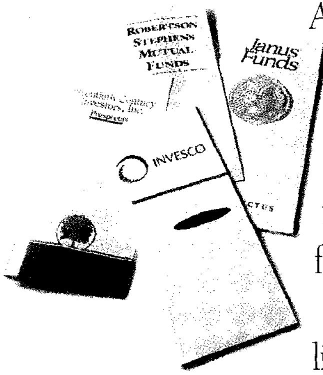

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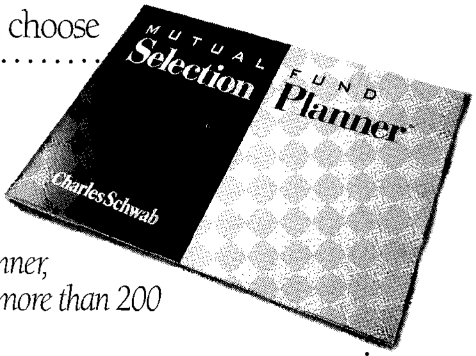

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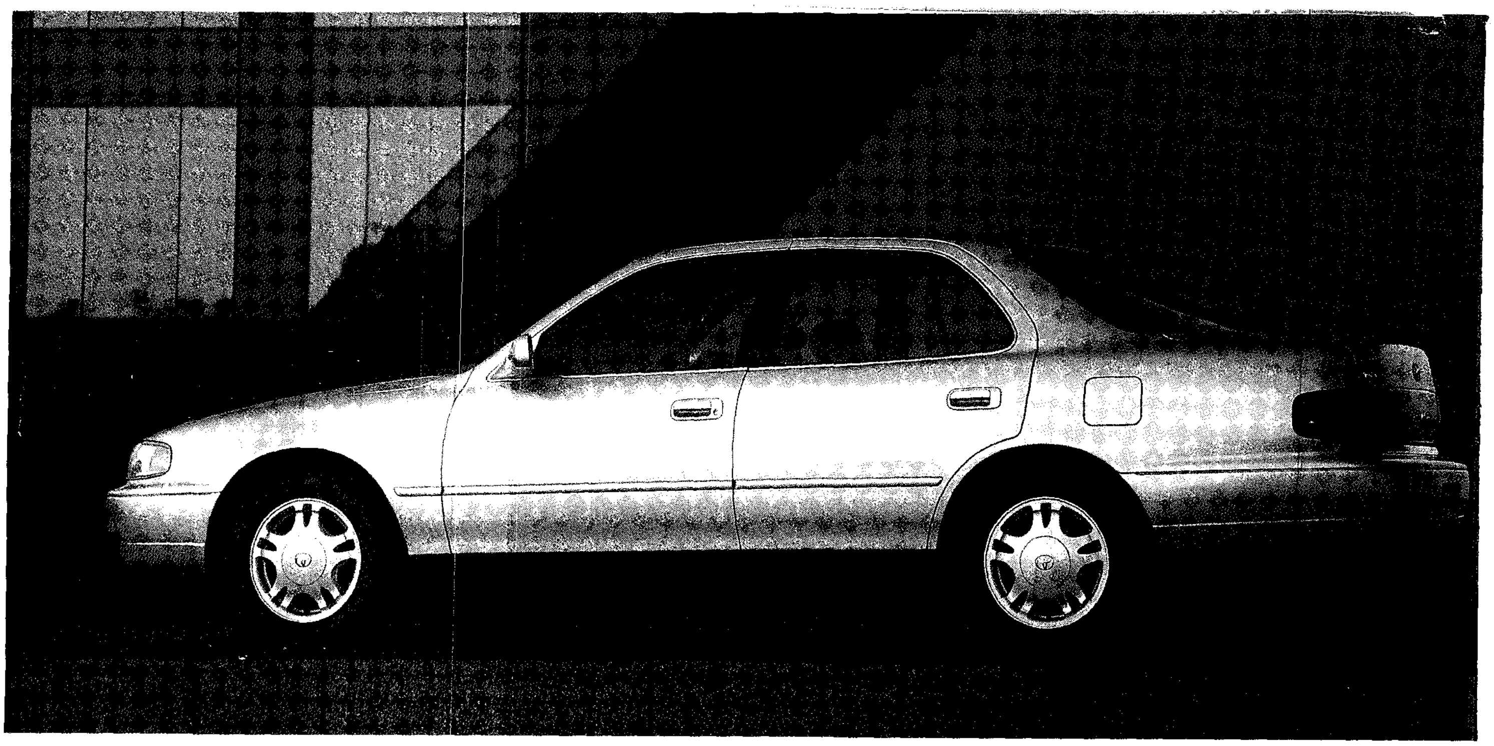

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